



**A READER
OF RADICAL
UNDERCURRENTS**

AGAINST CAPITAL

**IN THE
TWENTY-FIRST
CENTURY**

**EDITED BY JOHN ASIMAKOPOULOS
AND RICHARD GILMAN-OPALSKY**

Praise for

Against Capital in the Twenty-First Century

“In *Against Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Asimakopoulos and Gilman-Opalsky have assembled a collection of texts that traverses the borders of Marxism, feminist radicalisms, anarchism, and the interstices existing between them. This will be the leading collection for contemporary students of radical thought and practitioners of freedom for decades to come.”

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“In this extremely timely volume, Asimakopoulos and Gilman-Opalsky do an excellent job of weaving together the loose and disparate ends of transformative theory into a unified, mutually reinforcing whole. *Against Capital in the Twenty-First Century* is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the theoretical and practical trajectory of radical thought in today’s world.”

—**NATHAN J. JUN**, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Midwestern State University

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To Plato

—JOHN ASIMAKOPOULOS

To a world ungoverned by capital

—RICHARD GILMAN-OPALSKY

Contents

Acknowledgments	<i>xi</i>
Introduction: Against Capital in the Twenty-First Century • RICHARD GILMAN-OPALSKY AND JOHN ASIMAKOPOULOS	<i>1</i>
1 Theory/Praxis	<i>31</i>
1.1 Think Hope, Think Crisis • JOHN HOLLOWAY	<i>31</i>
1.2 The New Spaces of Freedom • FÉLIX GUATTARI	<i>38</i>
1.3 The Theory of State-Capitalism: The Soviet Union as Capitalist Society • RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA	<i>47</i>
1.4 Death, Freedom, and the Disintegration of Communism • RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA	<i>52</i>
1.5 Revolution and Counterrevolution in Hungary • RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA	<i>53</i>
1.6 Dialectics: The Algebra of Revolution • RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA	<i>54</i>
2 Ideology	<i>56</i>
2.1 Socialism or Barbarism • CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS	<i>56</i>
2.2 Ideology Materialized • GUY DEBORD	<i>59</i>
2.3 American “Common Sense” • FREDY PERLMAN	<i>62</i>
2.4 Radical Learning through Neoliberal Crisis • SAYRES RUDY	<i>65</i>

3 	Class Composition and Hierarchy	78
3.1	Karl Marx's Model of the Class Society • RALF DAHRENDORF	78
3.2	Sex, Race, and Class • SELMA JAMES	84
3.3	Wageless of the World • SELMA JAMES	89
3.4	Hierarchy of Wages and Incomes • CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS	94
3.5	A Brief Rant against Work: With Particular Attention to the Relation of Work to White Supremacy, Sexism, and Miserabilism • PENELOPE ROSEMONT	99
4 	Racialization and Feminist Critique	107
4.1	The Lived Experience of the Black Man • FRANTZ FANON	107
4.2	The Negro's Fight: Negroes, We Can Depend Only on Ourselves! • C.L.R. JAMES	114
4.3	Harlem Negroes Protest Jim Crow Discrimination • C.L.R. JAMES	116
4.4	Feminism and the Politics of the Common in an Era of Primitive Accumulation • SILVIA FEDERICI	122
4.5	#BlackLivesMatter • ALICIA GARZA	134
5 	Critical Pedagogy	139
5.1	Beyond Dystopian Visions in the Age of Neoliberal Violence • HENRY A. GIROUX	139
5.2	Chapman Democracy Activist Offers a Radical Critique of Capitalism: Interview with Peter McLaren • JONATHAN WINSLOW	156
5.3	Neoliberal Globalization and Resistance in Education: The Challenge of Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy • CONSTANTINE SKORDOULIS	160
5.4	Transformative Education, Critical Education, Marxist Education: Possibilities and Alternatives to the Restructuring of Education in Global Neoliberal Times • DAVE HILL	171
6 	Capitalist Culture and Cultural Production	186
6.1	The Revolution of Everyday Life • RAOUL VANEIGEM	186
6.2	Info-labor/Precairization • FRANCO "BIFO" BERARDI	193
6.3	Imaginal Machines • STEVPHEN SHUKAITIS	204

7 	Language, Literature, and Art	214
7.1	How We Could Have Lived or Died This Way • MARTÍN ESPADA	214
7.2	My Name Is Espada • MARTÍN ESPADA	215
7.3	Vivas to Those Who Have Failed: The Paterson Silk Strike, 1913 • MARTÍN ESPADA	216
7.4	Factotum • CHARLES BUKOWSKI	219
7.5	Interview with Robert Greenwald • JOHN ASIMAKOPOULOS	226
7.6	Sound of da Police • KRS-ONE	230
8 	Ecology	233
8.1	What Is Social Ecology? • MURRAY BOOKCHIN	233
8.2	Socialism and Ecology • JAMES O'CONNOR	241
8.3	Why Primitivism? • JOHN ZERZAN	250
8.4	In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism • ISABELLE STENGERS	258
9 	Historical Transformations	266
9.1	Conflict Groups, Group Conflicts, and Social Change • RALF DAHRENDORF	266
9.2	Debt: The First 5,000 Years • DAVID GRAEBER	269
9.3	When the Future Began • FRANCO "BIFO" BERARDI	277
9.4	Post-Fordist, American Fascism • ANGELA MITROPOULOS	284
10 	New Modalities of Collective Action	293
10.1	From Globalization to Resistance • STAUGHTON LYNND	293
10.2	Platform for a Provisional Opposition • GUY DEBORD	303
10.3	The Temporary Autonomous Zone • HAKIM BEY	308
10.4	The Conscience of a Hacker • THE MENTOR	312
10.5	Horizontalism and Territory: From Argentina and Occupy to Nuit Debout and Beyond • MARINA SITRIN	314
	Contributors	325
	Index	333

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Against Capital in the Twenty-First Century

Introduction

Against Capital in the Twenty-First Century

RICHARD GILMAN-OPALSKY AND JOHN ASIMAKOPOULOS

UNDERCURRENTS

In December 1917, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci wrote a short essay, “The Revolution against *Capital*,”¹ the title of which alludes to the title of Karl Marx’s major work. Gramsci observed that the Bolsheviks had made a revolution that undermined and refuted several of Marx’s defining theoretical insights. The revolution challenged Marx’s critique of ideology and his theory of historical conflict and change.

Gramsci observes that the revolution

consists more of ideologies than of events. . . . This is the revolution against Karl Marx’s *Capital*. In Russia, Marx’s *Capital* was more the book of the bourgeoisie than of the proletariat. It stood as the critical demonstration of how events should follow a predetermined course: how in Russia a bourgeoisie had to develop, and a capitalist era had to open, with the setting-up of a Western-type civilization, before the proletariat could even think in terms of its own revolt, its own class demands, its own revolution.²

However, war-torn Russia was far from the industrial capitalism of the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, and France. The revolution seemed to happen prematurely, before capitalist development made it necessary, before capital could prepare society for the great conflict and change. Gramsci insisted that Marx’s theory of revolution would hold true “in normal times”

and “under normal conditions” but that the proliferation of radical ideas and other unexpected instabilities might bring revolution under completely different circumstances.³

Gramsci, who remained a Marxist, did not intend to oppose the whole of Marx’s major work. His critique of Marx and Marxism was not a rejection but an effort to make Marx speak to unforeseen conditions. Indeed, the creative development and future relevance of Marx’s radical thinking depended (and still depends) on others to come after and rethink it in new directions.

Needless to say, we have less affection for Thomas Piketty than Gramsci had for Marx. But although our disagreements run deeper, and our critical knives are sharper, *Against Capital in the Twenty-First Century* is not an attack on Piketty’s famous book, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*.

Piketty’s book was more of an event than a book. It interrupted and intervened in many discussions within and beyond academia. Most scholarly books would like to be such an event as Piketty’s, but few are. And although we read *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* with much appreciation for its content and reception, the fact that it simultaneously condemns and accepts the failures of capitalism demands the response of this volume.

The authors in this volume do not address Piketty directly, but all of them undermine and reject his acceptance of the logic of capital and his foregone conclusion that the twenty-first century will be given over to capital just as the previous two centuries were. *Against Capital in the Twenty-First Century* presents a diversity of rival analyses and visions opposed to the idea that capital should have yet another century to govern human and nonhuman resources in the interest of profit and accumulation. Piketty demonstrates with decisive clarity that capitalism generates inequality through its own logic, no matter where and how well it is working, and more so now than ever. Nonetheless, he concludes that what capital really needs is to be more effectively and aggressively regulated through taxes.

Against Capital in the Twenty-First Century adopts an opposing thesis: that radical alternatives are necessary and possible. In fact, transformative, revolutionary, and abolitionist responses to capital are even more necessary in the twenty-first century than they ever were. Some of that argumentation is undertaken in this introductory essay. And further to that end, this book presents a reader of radical undercurrents to substantiate its opening claims.

Radical undercurrent does not, for us, mean *obscure* or *unknown*. While some of the authors in this volume would rightly be regarded as relatively obscure, others’ names will stand out as major or even famous figures in their fields. Some pack university auditoriums and overflow rooms. Why, then, the invocation of undercurrents?

An undercurrent is a strong force underneath the main flow. The undercurrents we pool together in this volume are also countercurrents of counterhegemonic directions and thus not prominently expressed with clarity and regularity in plain sight. A theoretical undercurrent is much like the physical undercurrent of water in that it moves below the surface and in a different direction than the current on the surface. It carries the promise, the potential of a new reality.

So many questionable positions are accepted as indisputable facts (e.g., that the United States is a democracy). In the dominant surface currents (which still run deep!), communism and anarchism represent traditions of antihuman violence and tyranny. Yet the violence of capital and the military are scarcely recognized as violent at all. In the surface currents, government is always and obviously necessary, for we swallow the Hobbesian notion that we would kill one another without it. And capitalist society, for all of its faults, is accepted as a natural and inevitable human situation. In the surface currents, the total acceptance of capital and state is perfectly synonymous with being reasonable.

The surface currents also carry ideals of justice, human rights, fairness, equality, and ecology forward as clear virtues, but only in a dilapidated and superficial way (an ironic superficiality within the surface). In fact, these words have been stripped of all original meanings and rebranded to mean anything good but nothing in particular. They have become “simulacra,” in Jean Baudrillard’s terms.⁴ For example, those who sing the praises and virtues of democracy regularly condemn the *demos* whenever it speaks in the streets or does not vote the way elites wish. Those who demand justice often accept as just a for-profit carceral state. Those who claim to love human rights and fairness regularly accept the pretensions of humanitarian warfare conceptualizing fairness only within the context of competition. That old, abused, classical virtue of equality is more often wielded as a bludgeon against any attempt to highlight a real differential of needs between real people in the real world. In the name of equality, we are often asked to ignore real inequalities on the basis of race, class, gender, and sexuality. And finally, ecological sensibilities are personalized so that one may be expected to shop and live green while ignoring massive and systematic deforestation and historical destruction and waste that we are encouraged to accept as out of our hands.

All of this and more flows in the surface current and characterizes it. But this surface current is not the only flow. There are different directions underneath, and there are advantages to depth, to getting down to the ground below, to the roots of things (more on which things in a moment).

In a strange way, Piketty is an undercurrent. What he has to say about capitalism, the social state, and taxation is still not said by anyone running

for the presidency in the United States.⁵ Piketty, Robert Reich, and Elizabeth Warren represent different sides of the same capitalist coin. This is partly why we specify not simply *undercurrents* but, rather, *radical undercurrents*. Like *undercurrent*, the term *radical* also indicates a digging down underneath the surface, but in a different way.

We are interested in the contrary undercurrents that would radically transform the whole flow of things, the flow of life, of human (exchange) relations, of time and space. Inasmuch as Piketty is an undercurrent, he is just under the surface (like a Bernie Sanders). Not all undercurrents are of equal depth, and some are too close to the main flows. Piketty, for example, does not grasp at the roots in order to pull them out. He reaches up only to push against the flow at certain points, to divert its direction where the water meets his hands, but he holds out no hope for a stoppage or reversal; nor does he seem to even want something different than the currents he condemns. He wants only a less condemnable capital, an obedient capital that has been brought to heel—a contradiction in terms.

From the seventeenth century, *radical* referred to the root of a word, and earlier in the fourteenth century, the Latin *radicalis* indicated the roots as in the origins, as in the word *radish*, which shares its etymology. The radish is a root vegetable, with its most coveted part growing underground. It was not until the early nineteenth century that the word *radical* took the meaning of dealing with social and political problems by going to their root causes. Interestingly, Piketty finds capital at the root of growing global inequality, and yet he remains distinctly committed to leaving its roots firmly planted and well watered. Not so odd, perhaps, given that Piketty is not a radical.

On the contrary, we have selected texts that we feel are important to the theorization of a twenty-first-century radical politics capable of a deep critique of both the logic and conditions of the existing capitalist world. For us, *revolutionary* change must be *transformative*, meaning structural transformation. To this end we have identified content that we believe significantly contributes to present and future conversations about the possibility and desirability of global revolutionary transformations.

Many of our authors are Gramsci's contemporary organic intellectuals. They represent not the juxtaposition of different forms of capitalism but the evolution of humanity into new forms of social organization. Their rival visions propose a diverse range of historical developments based on community, ecological balance, and happiness, rather than exploitation, ecological destruction, and suffering. Capitalist reform aims to repair the irreparable, a stillborn proposition. As individuals, our contributors may sound like fringe voices. But together, they give voice to the crises and hopes of a global ma-

majority of impoverished and increasingly precarious people. They amplify the voice of capital's victims.

Contributions have been selected according to three basic criteria. First, they offer a deep critique of capitalism; inequality; cultural, social, political, and ecological conditions; and everyday life as it is presently structured. We are committed to transformative projects that are not reconciled with a state of affairs they object to. Although some have nothing else in common with Marx while others have plenty, they all agree with his interest in “the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things.”⁶

Second, the authors in this volume do not share a unitary perspective on the state. Some criticize the top-down politics of statist leftism, while others are deeply suspicious of the efficacy of state-based solutions.

In the twentieth century, states did not even come close to solving the problems of capital or inequality, although many tried. To sharpen this point, we observe that today racism flourishes and flares up everywhere in response to immigrants, refugees, and uprisings of black and brown people around the world. Sexism rages on and is even extended and emboldened in reaction to new challenges confronting sanctioned norms of gender and sexuality. Inequality and poverty have only grown worldwide, as Piketty and others expertly demonstrate, despite the liberal reformism of governors everywhere. So many states have thrown their weight in the direction of solving these problems, but either they do not really want to or they cannot succeed (or maybe both). Moreover, states have invariably repressed, co-opted, and contaminated, criminalized, or outright combated the revolutionary energies of society. Government prefers to divert revolutionary energies into its own parties and institutions to instrumentalize social disaffection for its own purposes.

This does not mean our book is decisively anarchist, although we do draw in affirmative and constructive ways from a rich history of anarchist theory and action.⁷ In fact, many radicals, communists, artists, and other theorists and writers have criticized both anarchism and statism.⁸ What you will find in this volume is a general attraction to politics by other means than political institutions.

Third, we hope to embody and reflect a real diversity in radical thinking, reaching beyond a few narrow themes or disciplines, beyond the borders of any one ideological perspective. To be nonideological is not to be apolitical. To be nonideological is to be open to a synthetic and critical consideration of good ideas, regardless of their source—a task that sectarianism is incapable of.⁹

Indeed, we maintain that radical politics must leave behind nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideological dogma. Is it really too much to finally

acknowledge that the anarchists were right about many things where the Marxists were wrong? Is it too much to appreciate that good anarchists will have learned much from Marx, who has done more than anyone since to name and understand the power of capital? Is it not possible to fully reject idiotic false choices between class and gender? Can we finally insist on the necessity of taking seriously all the work that takes up all of these cleavages in social life? And what do we do with culture, ideology, and ecology? Do we continue to choose a commitment to one against the others, say to economy or ecology? Or do we instead strive to make our analysis as multifarious as the reality it seeks to understand, as complex as the world it wants to transform?

Nonetheless, this book leaves out a whole lot. Readers who will eagerly point out all that is missing here, who will lament any of the many deficits and oversights, will likely have our sympathies. One might imagine a small library of similar books in numbered volumes to even come close to bringing together the diverse universe of radical undercurrents. We have made difficult choices so that we can compile an anticapitalist and antistatist work from multiple traditions and trajectories, bringing together different forms of Marxism, anarchism, libertarian socialism, critical theory, radical feminism, and autonomist politics, among other affinities within our milieu. The choice to centralize these tendencies reflects both the theoretical and political commitments of the editors.¹⁰

PIKETTY'S LAUNCHPAD

Thomas Piketty's fifteen-year study on wealth and inequality was "based on much more extensive historical and comparative data than were available to previous researchers, data covering three centuries and more than twenty countries," and thus it provides an impressively multinational and historically rich picture of capitalist tendencies and effects.¹¹ Quibbles with and challenges to Piketty's picture have on the whole been surprisingly minor. Most of the disagreement takes issue with certain interpretations and methodologies but nothing that refutes or reverses his general conclusions, which have been widely accepted as authoritative by scholars across the social sciences.¹² Disagreement could have been predicted with absolute certainty, since Piketty finds that capital generates the opposite of what neoliberal and neoclassical economists claim: the freedom and historical tendencies of capital generate more inequality, less democracy, less opportunity, and consolidations of wealth and political power that are dangerous to life.

Piketty both appreciates and criticizes Marx. He posits that "economic theory needs to be rooted in historical sources that are as complete as possible, and in this respect Marx did not exploit all the possibilities available to

him.”¹³ From Piketty’s economistic view, Marx was not a very good economist. Of course, Marx wrote a dissertation in philosophy on the Democritean and Epicurean philosophy of nature, was consumed in his early years with the Hegelianism of midnineteenth-century Berlin, and was not particularly interested in being an economist any more than a historian, anthropologist, sociologist, or revolutionary. He found plenty to condemn in David Ricardo, Jean-Baptiste Say, and Adam Smith. Marx was never keen to be measured by disciplines, and his life’s work still stands as an iconic critique of disciplinarity as such.

Piketty measures Marx’s work not from a wide interdisciplinary academic or even political point of view but only as an economist. When he comments directly on Marx’s *Capital*, he observes:

Marx usually adopted a fairly anecdotal and unsystematic approach to the available statistics. . . . The most surprising thing, given that his book was devoted largely to the question of capital accumulation, is that he makes no reference to the numerous attempts to estimate the British capital stock that had been carried out since the beginning of the eighteenth century and extended in the nineteenth century. . . . Marx seems to have missed entirely the work on national accounting that was developing around him, and this is all the more unfortunate in that it would have enabled him to some extent to confirm his intuitions . . . and above all to clarify his explanatory model.¹⁴

We concede that Piketty rightly highlights statistical oversights and methodological failures that are surprising from an economist’s perspective. And we may add that there are many other oversights and failures in Marx’s work, from sociological, historical, political, and philosophical perspectives, which of course, so many sociologists, historians, political scientists, and philosophers have written about over the past 160 years. But when the best of Marx’s critics (e.g., Antonio Gramsci, Georg Lukács, and Silvia Federici) criticize him, they do not throw out the whole discourse on social and political transformation, human liberation, human suffering, and revolution. The best of Marx’s critics nonetheless agreed with Marx when he wrote, “Our concern cannot simply be to modify private property, but to abolish it, not to hush up class antagonisms but to abolish classes, not to improve the existing society but to found a new one.”¹⁵

But Piketty is not among the best of Marx’s critics. He abandons everything in Marx’s critical and revolutionary thinking, even though the statistical oversights that Piketty points out and compensates for further substantiate Marx’s basic economic analysis. In fact, Piketty goes much further

than Marx ever could in documenting and demonstrating the catastrophic tendencies and material effects of capitalism. Yet Piketty ultimately adopts a less critical and an antirevolutionary position. His research both strengthens Marx's arguments and rejects them without argument. But if the missing economic analysis in Marx's work is not dissuasive of his general perspective, then we might wonder what is.

We might wonder if the problem for Piketty (and so many of his readers) is not so much that Marx was not the optimal economist but rather that Piketty is too much the (neo)liberal.¹⁶ It is precisely the radical content of Marx that (neo)liberals always reject, not so much by way of argumentation but by way of ideological commitment. In other words, Piketty's rejection of Marx's critical and revolutionary perspective cannot simply be due to the fact that Piketty is an economist. It is worth pointing out here that one coeditor of this book is classically trained in, and professor of, economics, political science, and sociology. The other coeditor is classically trained in, and professor of, philosophy and political science. We aim to deploy the interdisciplinary resources that Piketty admires yet neglects.

Piketty himself explains why the field of economics, especially in the United States, affirms the existing capitalist reality: "Among the members of these upper income groups are US academic economists, many of whom believe that the economy of the United States is working fairly well and, in particular, that it rewards talent and merit accurately and precisely."¹⁷ Therefore, economic analysis alone guarantees no sure precision, for as Piketty claims, it is commonly disfigured by the ideological and class positions of the economists. But what of Piketty's own ideology and its role in shaping his work and conclusions? He is himself an upper-income academic (bourgeois) economist who, in interviews, is quick to point out that he is neither a Marxist nor against capitalism.

Although Piketty claims that inequality "cannot be reduced to purely economic mechanisms," he fails to consider that inequality is only one feature of a system that does harm on so many other levels, including the ecological, psychological, and social.¹⁸ Here we see the poverty of disciplines and the value of intersectionality that is so central to autonomist communist and anarchist analyses. While the present volume leaves gaps of its own, it aims to fill in many of those left by Piketty. But the holes we seek to fill are not left by a simple oversight. The problems taken up in this volume derive from a much more dangerous and fundamental error in the world—namely, from all of the thinking, speaking, and writing about capital and capitalism without even knowing what capital or capitalism is!¹⁹ As David Graeber writes, "All this raises the question of what 'capitalism' is to begin with, a question on which there is no consensus at all."²⁰

Piketty has written the most influential book on capital and capitalism in the past several decades, and yet he does not know what the basic terms and concepts of his work mean. Consider his decision to “use the words ‘capital’ and ‘wealth’ interchangeably, as if they were perfectly synonymous.”²¹ This was not only a decision, as Piketty claims, “to simplify the text.”²² It was a decision that guaranteed his book would not be about capital or capitalism, but rather, about wealth and income inequality.

Wealth is not capital. Capital is not something in the world that we can measure, although its effects can be measured. Capital is a logic that organizes the world, work, education, home life, social life, entertainment, news media, our free time, and indeed, most of our wakeful state. So capital is not *merely* a logic in some philosophical sense, for it concretely organizes real life from birth to death. It is an ideology materialized. Wealth can be defined at and above a certain income level, but it is one of thousands of outcomes of the capitalist organization of life. However, poverty is yet another outcome of capital, and it would have made no less sense to equate capital and capitalism with poverty, especially since most people living in the capitalist world are poor. Capital is no more wealth than it is poverty—a basic point lost on Piketty.

As Marx defined it in 1844, “capital is thus the *governing power* over labor and its products. The capitalist possesses this power, not on account of his personal or human qualities, but inasmuch as he is an *owner* of capital. His power is the *purchasing* power of his capital, which nothing can withstand. Later we shall see first how the capitalist, by means of capital, exercises his governing power over labor, then, however, we shall see the governing power of capital over the capitalist himself.”²³

Thus, while one could be said to own capital, capital is a power that governs, including those who own it. Governments are governed by capital. Work is governed by capital, but so is nonwork inasmuch as the times and spaces when we are not working are also largely determined by the logic of capital. But Marx’s definition of capital specifies other necessary dimensions, specifically capitalist purchasing power. This means that capital converts the ability to buy things in the capitalist marketplace into power. Thus, capital makes it sensible to speak of the “power” to have food, the “power” to move from one place to another (power of mobility), the “power” to have housing or medicine or education or water or a few extra inches of legroom on a plane. Power does not need to be defined as capital defines it, and neither does value or freedom or virtue.

Critical to Marx’s definition is that the governing power of capital governs the capitalist himself. Here, we can and must also distinguish capital from wealth in the following way: *Whereas wealth is an instrument of the*

capitalist, the capitalist is an instrument of capital. The capitalist does what he does, thinks what he thinks, aspires what he aspires to do and to be, and accepts a moral point of view—a *comprehensive worldview*—all made by capital. The aspirations of capitalists do not come from nowhere. Capitalist society educates and acculturates generations of true believers to accept the virtues of a highly individualist “familial-vocational privatism.”²⁴ A world without capitalists is no capitalist world. Understanding this is critical to the rejection of Piketty’s conflation of wealth with capital. In recent U.S. politics, for example, consider the millions of Trump supporters from the impoverished white working class who energetically defend capitalist society while possessing no wealth of their own. From bottom to top, those who defend and perpetuate capitalist ideology are instruments of capital.

In short, *capital* is a governing power, a purchasing power, a power that governs both the governed and the governors themselves. *Capitalism*, then, refers to the whole ideological apparatus that promotes and proliferates capital as the ideal logic of social (and economic, political, cultural, and ecological) organization. And finally, *capitalist* describes (or names) forms of life, social, political, and economic systems, and the people who embody, reflect, and reproduce the power of capital.

This basic understanding of capital is absent when Piketty conflates capital with wealth. It turns out that wealth is only a form of capital inasmuch as it corresponds to and determines purchasing power. Nonetheless, it is possible to make public space, education, food, water, health care, and housing free for everyone who needs or wants them, and thus to decouple such things from wealth, from the commodity form altogether. This is not utopian. It refers to a past, present, and future populated with many familiar examples. Public parks, universities, health care systems, and so on can be found in capitalist societies, so they are not even radical or revolutionary. The closest we can come to Piketty would be to say that *in capitalist societies*, all wealth is capital (in terms of purchasing power), but not all capital is wealth. In reducing capital to wealth, Piketty not only makes a fatal mistake in defining the central concept of his study but also betrays his opening declaration that we must not make economic reductions. In this volume, wealth is taken up as a feature of capitalist society, but so are many features other than wealth. Max Weber comes to mind; in contrast to Marx, he analyzed stratification by class, prestige, and power.

Another reason we are against capital in the twenty-first century, whereas Piketty is not, is that we understand capital as a power that governs everything to the detriment of everything. We are against capital in the twenty-first century because it is unacceptable not only in terms of income inequality

but also in terms of ecological crisis, human psychological and physical health, human security, and an ethical and democratic political situation.

Even if we restricted ourselves to the sole focus on inequality provided by Piketty, allowing capital to govern another century would be unacceptable. Piketty informs his readers that “global inequality ranges from regions in which the per capita income is on the order of 150–250 euros per month (sub-Saharan Africa, India) to regions where it is as high as 2,500–3,000 euros per month (Western Europe, North America, Japan), that is, ten to twenty times higher. The global average, which is roughly equal to the Chinese average, is around 600–800 euros per month.”²⁵ Aside from the fact that millions in Western Europe, North America, and Japan are making closer to (and less than) the global average, the average itself is unacceptable, and not only from a radical perspective. This global average is well under 10,000 euros per year, which is not a livable wage. On an annual basis, it breaks down to roughly 5 euros an hour at a thirty-five-hour workweek.

Compared to this global average, even after controlling for the relative valuation of the euro, the recent “leftist” demand in the United States for \$15 an hour appears just as radical as it’s made out to be by advocates and critics. Activists and advocates in the “fight for 15” take pride in their high wage demand, while detractors agree that the demand is high—indeed, too high to be practical. And yet \$15 an hour comes out to about \$25,000 a year (at a thirty-five-hour workweek). This would have been less than a living income for a lower-middle-class family of two to three in 1950. Therefore, what is put forward as a radical demand in 2016 would have been a tepid and reasonable expectation over sixty years ago. Moreover, the average hours worked by Americans increased as incomes stagnated. Americans now work more hours per year than in any other country, surpassing Japan. And Americans receive fewer holidays and less vacation time or sick days than is standard in much of the world. This should give the reader some sense of the beaten-down and dilapidated state of today’s liberal wage politics.

Piketty’s focus on practicality partly explains why his conclusions are so conservative (more on this later). But in light of the politics of global income inequality, it turns out that what is “practical” is not only unacceptable but possibly even impossible—that is, unlivable—for most. Thus capitalism defines *practicality* as the acceptance of a reality that is impractical for most of us.

Piketty understands well the distribution problem that he presents with clarity and an appropriate severity: “The current per capita national income in Britain and France is on the order of 30,000 euros per year, and national capital is about 6 times national income, or roughly 180,000 euros per head.”²⁶ That the populations of these countries generate massive national

wealth that they cannot keep or share is fundamental to capitalism. People's incomes could of course reflect a fairer distribution of this national wealth—*the money is there*—but that is not capitalism. The British and French governments, despite the rhetorical and ideological differences of the parties in power, do not and cannot oppose this capitalist separation of national capital from national income. That is because the parties do not govern capital. To the contrary, the parties are governed by capital(ists). President François Hollande, with a life in the French Socialist Party dating back to the 1970s, knew well that this capitalist separation of people from the very capital that they generate (capital in Piketty's sense of wealth) was off-limits to his "socialist" regime. If Hollande had sought to reverse this separation, he would not have been president.

Piketty has a different view here. For example, he recognizes that prior to the end of the Cold War, the forms of inequality we now see were almost nonexistent in the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc. "All signs are that the distribution was strictly the opposite: private wealth was insignificant (limited to individual plots of land and perhaps some housing in the Communist countries least averse to private property but in all cases less than a year's national income), and public capital represented the totality of industrial capital and the lion's share of national capital. . . . In other words, at first sight, the stock of national capital did not change, but the public-private split was totally reversed."²⁷

Following this, one might expect a defense of Soviet "communism," but Piketty knows better than to romanticize or to take as his model post-Stalinist Russia. And although he does call for a kind of state capitalism, he knows better than to call for a revival of the collapsed bureaucratic capitalism of the previous century. One major reason why Piketty does not call for anything like the Soviet example is that, for him, the bureaucratic state capitalism of the twentieth century is simply what is meant by *communism*, and of course, we cannot be communists today. Anarchists, Marxists, and other radicals have theorized communism in multifarious ways, few of which romanticize or defend Soviet statism. The idea that what is called *revolution*, *communism*, and, more broadly, *anticapitalism* amounts to nothing more than the iconic caricatures and catastrophes of twentieth-century Stalinism and Cold War ideology is a major part of the problem. That notion makes us fear and reject anything other than capitalism and has effectively done so for over a century. In a critical con, post-Fordist capitalism (integrated spectacle) has convinced us not to accept the old capitalism (concentrated spectacle) in favor of a more flexible, "freer," and supposedly more democratic capitalism. If one accepts that every alternative to capitalism has proven disastrous, then a resigned acceptance of capitalist permanence stands to reason. And alas, like so many

of the neoclassical economists he criticizes, Piketty likewise falls prey to the same tired conflation, namely, that all radical alternatives have been tested and failed, echoing the discredited “end of history” thesis. Piketty simultaneously proves capitalism disastrous and accepts its permanence.

In Chapter 11 of *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, “Merit and Inheritance in the Long Run,” Piketty demonstrates that inequality will grow, poverty will be more consolidated and devastating, and exclusions more brutal in the twenty-first century than in the nineteenth and twentieth. He shows how the old meritocratic belief about people getting what they’re worth and what they’ve actually earned is not evidenced in the research and “that the most meritocratic beliefs are often invoked to justify very large wage inequalities, which are said to be more justified than inequalities due to inheritance.”²⁸ Perversely, capitalism continues to actively defend inequality with a meritocratic ideology, and capitalists have the same reply ready at their lips.

APOLOGETICS AND TAXES

To Piketty’s credit, his research exposes with remarkable clarity the increasing financial violence of capital over the past three hundred years. He shows that capital’s tendencies are to exacerbate, not to remedy economic violence. No methodological or interpretive quibble refutes this well-demonstrated tendency toward severe inequality, surpassing that during feudal times.

Yet the meritocratic discourse that Piketty skewers remains a central part of a highly developed capitalist “apologetics,” to use Marx’s term.²⁹ Capitalist apologists today defend the poverty and power that capital consolidates globally. They explain away crises as miraculously having nothing to do with capital or capitalism directly. As Marx put it, “Instead of investigating the nature of the conflicting elements which erupt in the catastrophe, the apologists content themselves with denying the catastrophe itself and insisting, in the face of their regular and periodic recurrence, that if production were carried on according to the textbooks, crises would never occur.”³⁰ Economists today, expressing the meritocratic ideology of neoliberal capitalism, reliably insist that the current crisis was in no way caused by capitalism but by any number of epiphenomenal factors. And to its credit, Piketty’s book serves as a fierce tome against such apologetics. What apologists do not realize is that real-world capitalism has indeed operated according to the textbooks. The actual outcomes of capitalist economics are disowned by apologists who refuse to acknowledge capitalism’s paternity.

In light of this, could Piketty have written the introduction to this book, *Against Capital in the Twenty-First Century*? Based on the first 467 pages of

his book, it would seem that no other position could survive the evidence of his research than one opposing capital in the twenty-first century.

But then Piketty wrote Part Four of his book, espousing a position far worse than that of the meritocratic apologists who deny the most basic contradictions of capital. The final four chapters of Part Four contain Piketty's stupefying full acceptance of the capital he condemns. This leads him to conclude with an unimaginative repetition of the same hackneyed recommendations: redistribution (read: alleviation) through tax policy like those of Joseph Stiglitz. Piketty calls for a new social state that can levy "a truly global tax on capital."³¹ He insists this is not utopian, and we believe him!

For all his talk about the poverty of narrow economic analyses, Piketty's tome ignores the workings of the political system under capitalism that he relies on for his solutions. Had he attended to the problem of governments governed by capital, it would have been necessary to acknowledge that the political structure is a mirror image of capitalism. This is basic political economy. Here is one of his biggest logical fallacies. Piketty argues that capitalism is an economic system that needs to be regulated by a political system based on the assumption that political systems are distinct from economic systems. But if the political and economic systems are interconnected as a unitary capitalist structure, would we not need regulation within both the economic *and* political structures? Who, other than capital, will reregulate the political structure?

Piketty may not know or wish to publicly acknowledge what is necessary to wrest even such mundane concessions as tax redistribution from governments beholden to and run by elites. Marxists, some socialists, autonomists, anarchists, and many others agree: change cannot occur within the limits of the existing political structure. It is imposed from outside institutional processes. Therefore, there will be violence for change. What constitutes violence, and what justifies it (if anything does), are major and defining questions in philosophy and politics. What is easier to conclude is that the state is responsible for most of the worst violence in human history. Some advocate property destruction because violence can only be committed against a person. Some, such as Mikhail Bakunin, accept violence against people (e.g., elites and state functionaries), whereas others believe in peaceful civil disobedience. Some Marxists believe in revolution to take over the state, a violent proposition. Some anarchists believe in a revolution to end the state. The editors of this volume have argued for insurrection, since insurrections are the active processes of revolutionary transformation—a topic addressed by both in other works. We argue that insurrection may be the radical undercurrent of revolution. For example, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and the Egyptian Revolution established new situations with

new problems that could only be addressed by new insurrections. Uprisings from within (and against) the new reality give impetus to change it. In the French, Russian, and Egyptian examples, one can see revolution setting the stage for autocracy, state capitalism, and military rule, respectively. We do not defend the earlier monarchical, tsarist, and dictatorial forms but recognize that insurrection is the real dialectical force of negation.

In fact, getting governments to govern the capital that governs them is less likely than global revolt. Even if the global tax were possible, what would it do? Would national capital be distributed (more) equally? If so, by whom and by what powers? Piketty presents “the return of the state,” which shares his egalitarian values and hopes, as an answer to the most recent economic crisis of 2008.³² Such a state can then reverse the current relationship of capital to governance. He does not call for the return of the failed “socialist state” but rather for a new “social state” that can bring capital back under its administrative control. We understand Piketty’s instinct to defend against the charge of utopianism here, especially since the past four decades have witnessed the neoliberal abolition of the last known social states (e.g., in Western Europe).

In Piketty’s proposal, everything old is new again: “Modern redistribution does not consist in transferring income from the rich to the poor. . . . It consists rather in financing public services and replacement incomes that are more or less equal for everyone, especially in the areas of health, education, and pensions.”³³ What we have seen instead is the privatization of health, education, and pensions. Public universities have shifted increasingly to a tuition revenue model. Piketty recognizes that “parents’ income has become an almost perfect predictor of university access.”³⁴ And health care is increasingly outsourced to and/or underwritten by private for-profit corporations, even in the case of public options that depend on private firms, and a pharmaceutical industry that sees illness as profit. What about pensions? Aside from rising retirement ages globally, pensions (not to mention social security) don’t even exist in many of the states where they once did. Pensions are among the first things commonly placed on the chopping block under the auspices of budget cuts and austerity. Where does the hope for a social state that will rise to these challenges come from?

We now know that it was not the hopeful antiausterity-movement-turned-government of Syriza in Greece. Syriza stood up to the troika, saying no to a future governed by European austerity, and then agreed to exactly that future. Even a “radical” government like Syriza, which was made possible only by years of insurrection and a culture of revolt following the crises of 2008, could do nothing to reverse unemployment, shrinking pensions, and high taxes on impoverished people. Syriza was the brightest political light

against capital since the recent global crisis broke out into world news. Now, Syriza participates in the realization of capital's dream: no opposition, further privatization, and debt bondage.

Perhaps Piketty found hope in the pseudosocialist rule of his own President Hollande in France, who was more fiercely and overwhelmingly opposed by the Left than any regime since 1968. The powerful movement of *Nuit Debout* from March 2016 expressed the revolutionary disaffection of millions against Hollande, who trust their insurrection more than they trust their "socialist state." And does anyone really think that Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party will reverse recent introductions of university tuition and restore the services hobbled by austerity? In fact, Corbyn's leadership was soon challenged by the Brexit referendum vote in June 2016, the outcome of which testified to the enduring strength of nationalist and capitalist self-interest in Europe today.

The irrefutable fact of the matter is that capital is going in the exact opposite of the direction in which Piketty would like it to go. Worse, capital governs *precisely* those governments that would be the most likely to tame it. There is more hope in the groundswells of revolt that made Syriza and Corbyn possible, and there is more hope in *Nuit Debout*, than there is in Syriza, the Labour Party, or the French Socialist Party—unless they enter formal politics, which we would argue was the trajectory of Syriza: insurrection coalesces into social movement; the movement chooses to form a political party as the best way to obtain change; the political party struggles for representation in political institutions (e.g., parliament); it may become a powerless opposition; sometimes it forms a government; and then comes the realization of why many consider working through existing political processes a fool's errand.

But like most liberals, Piketty never takes a serious look at such powers from below, at the expression of social and political energies beneath and against the administrative apparatus of the state. Such forces and expressions may help or hinder the emergence of the great social state, but what we really need, Piketty maintains, is the power of an administered economy back once again, one more try, and this time for good.

If you think we are melodramatic, unduly fixated on a minor disagreement, or perhaps a little unfair, we can correct that misperception now. To demonstrate the ultimate poverty of Piketty's perspective, let us finally look at the single most dumbfounding and backward claim in his whole book.

He claims that taxation is "preeminently a political and philosophical issue, perhaps the most important of all political issues. Without taxes, society has no common destiny, and collective action is impossible."³⁵ The poverty of this claim is exasperating. Thomas Hobbes had a far richer understanding of the commonwealth in 1651 than Piketty in 2014. Whereas Graeber

demonstrates that taxes were established as a way for kings to finance wars (still true today), for Piketty taxation is the apex of human association. For him, taxation demonstrates commonality and human solidarity more than actual relationships or human community. And after nearly two centuries of tax resistance as a political and philosophical issue (by no means beginning or ending with Henry David Thoreau's famous example), Piketty claims that collective action is impossible without taxes.

That collective action is impossible without taxes may come as a surprise to social movements going back to the abolitionists and suffragists; to recent participants in global uprisings over the past decade; to a long history of slave revolts, insurrection, armed rebellion, strikes, sit-ins, town and factory take-overs, and organized movements of boycott and divestment; to not only revolutions but revolutionaries and their insurgent cultures. On the nonpolitical front, the fact that a common destiny (or some sense of common cause for a shared future hope) is impossible without taxes may come as a surprise to families around the world; to religious communities and their *Gemeinwesen*; to humanists of any kind, from Immanuel Kant to Jean-Paul Sartre; and to LGBT people, impoverished blacks in the United States, indigenous peoples and the Zapatistas, and so many other distinct communities of choice or fate. From the broad ideals of hospitality and inclusion to the coordinated human actions of striking workers, occupation movements, and jail solidarity, the claim that society can only have a common destiny through taxes announces nothing short of a brazen historical stupidity or an astonishing example of Orwellian doublethink.

Silvia Federici has influentially written of "the commons" and John Holloway has written of many kinds of "other-doing," pointing to examples from birth and child rearing to community gardens and autonomous localities, all of which demonstrate commonality through forms of collective action that neither pass through the state nor depend on taxes.³⁶ Does the very existence of feminism, or of community for that matter, depend on the codification of the policies of a social state? Have feminism and community done nothing at all for people that cannot be measured in dollars and cents by the tax collector? We can agree with Piketty that taxation is indeed one way to make common cause, to act *through* capital as a collectivity. But taxation is, from the perspective of any theory of collective action, a weak and nominal example of how to act with others for some common cause. Piketty's ideal form is collective action by filing a tax return.

He claims that the purpose of a global tax on capital "is not to finance the social state but to regulate capitalism. The goal is first to stop the indefinite increase of inequality of wealth, and second to impose effective regulation on the financial and banking system in order to avoid crises."³⁷ The

regulation of capitalism—that is the plan. For one, this ignores the fact that crises are a consequence of capitalism. But even if capital’s tendencies toward exploitation, accumulation, and consolidation could be regulated, all the would-be regulators have been busy for many decades giving away their regulatory and juridical powers and jurisdictions. This has enabled capital to run amok, codified in trade policies from the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Economic Forum, and G8. This long and incomplete list is familiar not only to economists but increasingly to everyday people ever since the 1999 Seattle and 2001 Genoa protests against the WTO and G8 global forums. These developments in policy and institutional power attest to the death of the regulatory model Piketty wants to resurrect.

There is no political will among power holders to reassert sovereignty over the new post-Fordist economy of finance capital. While many states in the post-9/11 era are attempting to limit the movement of people, including immigrants and refugees, capital has eliminated any reregulation of its own movement. Today, capital only tolerates social commitments and initiatives inasmuch as they do not challenge or reverse its profit logic. This has been demonstrated throughout Europe with austerity, and of course, very sharply in France against the contentious 2016 *loi travail* (labor law) that gives private companies new and greater powers to fire their employees in the name of “flexibility.”³⁸ Simply put, states have authorized capital to govern, both by force and by choice.

Isn’t there something terribly obvious in this criticism? Indeed, Piketty is aware of his critics and even anticipates the objections of radicals. He recognizes that “Karl Marx and many other socialist writers in the nineteenth century” were “far more radical and, if nothing else, more logically consistent.”³⁹ He cites, in particular, the abolition of private property and of the private ownership of the means of production. And yet Piketty’s sole and central example of the “more radical” and “more logically consistent” alternative is always the discredited “Soviet experiment,” while quickly pointing out that his “tax on capital would be a less violent and more efficient response.”⁴⁰ Thus, it would appear, there is only the less radical solution of his global tax, or the more radical solution of the Soviet Union. For Piketty, all rival visions are examples of failures from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries that have in no way stopped or reversed the privatizing, globalizing, and consolidating capitalist logic of growth and accumulation. In many ways, Piketty

seems to have accepted the central thesis in Francis Fukuyama's "The End of History?"⁴¹

In the end, Piketty equates all the more radical and consistent solutions—if they are not already Stalinist—as always at risk of some totalitarian destination. He does not consider that capital is also a totalitarian power, since it functionally and demonstrably governs not just one state but most states (if not all, on some level). In fact, it is amazing that although Piketty is keen on history, he ignores the relationship between fascism and capitalism, as can be seen in the major German and Italian examples of authoritarianism and standardization in politics coupled with capitalist economy.⁴² Had he done so, he would realize that fascism and Soviet-style "socialism" were in fact totalitarian forms of capitalism. This undermines the famous false dichotomy of regulated capitalism versus Stalinism and nullifies everything in his book beyond the statistical data and the basic analysis of the historical consolidation of inequality and wealth.

He also does not take seriously anything on the vast terrain of non-Stalinist Marxism or in any of the diverse revolutionary traditions or trajectories in thought and action, and unsurprisingly he finds nothing of value (or even worth looking at) in the anarchist tradition. So it is not just a matter of making the Marxist defense against Stalinism by pointing out, for example, that Stalin himself rejected Marx's basic system of thought.⁴³

The conservative discourse about the totalitarian state is different from the critique of statism by communists and other radicals. The communist and capitalist share a peculiar footing in their antistatistism. But the details beyond this generality make them different. Piketty traces conservative fearmongering of the growing state (and the shrinking rights of individuals) to Milton Friedman and Chicago school economists who "fostered suspicion of the ever-expanding state and created the intellectual climate in which the conservative revolution of 1979–1980 became possible."⁴⁴ In opposition to this fearmongering, Piketty points to the New Deal: "Saving capitalism did not require a welfare state or a tentacular government: the only thing necessary was a well-run Federal Reserve."⁴⁵ But in the light of Piketty's evidence, it seems strange to even be talking about "saving capitalism." That is the standard reply of the Left to the conservative critic, and it reveals whom Piketty is thinking about as his audience. He is writing for liberals and conservatives who agree in wanting to save capitalism in crisis, to save it in ways that would recalibrate necessary commitments to basic human rights through global taxation and the social state.

We are not Piketty's intended reading public, and we are not his conservative critics. If he were writing for us, for his radical critics from the Left, his book would have not been such an event. But we do want to ask a big,

basic, and irresistible question that Piketty's work raises so powerfully yet hasn't the courage or interest to consider: *What if our future is not the future of capitalism?* In other words, what if we can live in other ways than those that are governed by capital? What if we are more convinced by Piketty than Piketty himself, and because of that, what if we are not looking forward to another capitalist century with desperate liberal commitments to the same failed plans? We have imaginations and we reject any menu on which the only options are capitalism or tyranny, which is like choosing between one catastrophe or another.

Throughout, Piketty hones in on the irreducible contradiction of capitalism that he calls $r > g$. "The principal destabilizing force has to do with the fact that the private rate of return on capital, r , can be significantly higher for long periods of time than the rate of growth of income and output, g ."⁴⁶ More simply, past and existing wealth grow at a rapid pace such that already existing wealth accumulates and consolidates far more quickly than wages rise. Indeed, wages often go up very slowly and minimally. As Piketty puts it, "The past devours the future."⁴⁷ The long-run trend of this tendency, which occurs on a global scale, is the drastic exacerbation of inequality, which translates into deepening disparities of political and social power. Whereas the contradictions of capital, for Marx, gave hope in a destabilization of the existing reality that would make revolution possible, Piketty studies the contradictions in order to guard against all destabilizing forces.

This clarifies why the only form of collective action that Piketty recognizes is taxation. Revolt, insurrection, global uprisings, revolution: all of these terms correspond to social upheavals that contribute to the basic destabilization Piketty wants to guard against. We propose the opposite: given centuries of capitalist impoverishment and the global tendencies of growing inequality, the last thing we need is to "stabilize" capitalism by way of regulations that secure it for another hundred years.

To his credit, Piketty calls for noneconomists to get into the numbers, to overcome the widespread fear of numbers, and he importantly recognizes that "accumulating data is not always indispensable or even (I concede) especially imaginative."⁴⁸ This last point is perhaps the main one. Does Piketty appreciate just how much the radical imagination could help us to overcome present impasses of political economy? Perhaps what we really need is less statistical analysis and more imagination. Consider the fact that what now exists is *not* the only possible situation. Such a basic formulation makes the point appear obvious. Yet without imagination, what now exists is regularly presupposed as the only possible situation, and the analysis pursues solutions to problems of the present situation alone, as if its basic structure were permanent.

The logical conclusion of Piketty's research, which he himself resists and rejects, is inevitable: *Capital is the problem. Taxation is not the problem.* To claim that taxation is the problem, *and not capital*, is another form of double-think. Taxation is, in fact, the private property of capital. Taxation belongs to capital as its most cherished tool, as evidence of its morality, used by capital to justify capitalism. Taxation only gives false hope that one day we will have a capitalism without its brutal contradictions. This is a faith held out against a history of taxation that has not reversed *any* of the contradictions or tendencies of capital, a history compiled decisively in Piketty's work.

Piketty exchanges the apologetics of meritocracy for the apologetics of taxation. We do not seek the reregulation of capital. We seek its abolition.

ON THE CONTRARY

Aside from this introductory essay, our book does not take up Piketty's work directly. This is no accident or oversight. We want to say not only that "Piketty is not enough!" but more importantly, "Enough with Piketty liberalism!" We could not present the desired range and imagination of abolitionist and transformative thinking while remaining tethered to Piketty's text. Our engagement with and invocation of Piketty's work here is not only to mark it as a launchpad for this book but also to offer it as an example of the contradiction we seek to overcome. Namely, we are against the thorough critique of capital that simultaneously assumes its permanence and our indefinite acceptance. That Piketty of all people proposes the reregulation of capital makes him the perfect example of this contradiction, because unlike others who propose tax policy solutions, he doesn't have the excuse of knowing nothing about the deregulating logic and history of capitalism.

On the contrary, we provide diverse analyses of social, economic, political, and ecological crises that think beyond capitalist boundaries and a compendium of examples of the many ways of being against capital. Piketty is not necessary or necessarily relevant to the critical analyses we present here, though we can imagine the ideal pairing of his book with ours for anyone interested in thinking seriously about capitalism today. Readers may take up this book without Piketty's, although its critical contributions are perhaps starker alongside it.

We begin with critical texts on the relationship of theory and praxis. Praxis is not practice. Praxis challenges the separation of thought from action. It is the development of new thinking and understandings, which emerge by way of events and actions in the world. Social and political movements are not cut off from theory but, rather, inform it. Theory that is not informed by the reality and activity of everyday people is bad theory. As opposed to the famous philosophical dictum *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am),

praxis specifies human being and action first—that is, action as a modality of thinking.

The overarching purpose of Chapter 1 is to explore basic questions of how theory is related to, and comes out of, movements. Global economic crises since 2008 have brought about diverse global uprisings, which compel us to consider income inequality, neoliberalism, and globalization. We do not accept that only economists can understand crises, assuming they are even capable. Rather, we posit that critical theorists, organic intellectuals, and insurrectionists have understood and explained the dynamics of capital clearly since its conceptualization.

As a theorist, John Holloway has long invoked lessons from the Zapatistas: “Asking, we walk. We advance by asking, by trying to connect with the other dignities that surround us, the other rebellions that surround us. We try and move forward through discussion, through hearing, through asking people about their rebelliousness, about their dignity.”⁴⁹ Indeed, challenging what *is* and listening closely to the disaffection and indignation of others is part of the process of reflecting on problems and solutions. We do not need to confidently agree on certain solutions before we act, for then we would never do anything. Happily, uprisings against austerity, global poverty, and rising precarity do not wait for answers from academics and are not content with the reality being sold in spectacular capitalist society.

In the social and political sciences, focusing on policy analysis and reform diminishes the relevance of any upheaval or uprising. Asking “what the uprising has changed” puts the focus on specific policy agendas and reforms as measures of the insurrection’s effectiveness. Thus, insurrection is often seen as an ineffectual strategy for obtaining new policies. But that is often not the case at all. Insurrection embodies and reflects the revolutionary aspirations of the oppressed who long for a different arrangement of life, not for a new policy with fine print to “accept” as instructed. According to Rudolf Rocker, one of the most articulate exponents of anarchist theory:

The peoples owe all the political rights and privileges . . . not to the good will of their governments, but to their own strength. Governments have employed every means that lay in their power to prevent the attainment of these rights or to render them illusory. Great mass movements among the people and whole revolutions have been necessary to wrest these rights from the ruling classes, who would never have consented to them voluntarily. . . . Only after the workers had by direct action confronted parliament with accomplished facts, did the government see itself obliged to take the new situation into account and give legal sanction to the trade unions. *What is important is not*

*that governments have decided to concede certain rights to the people, but the reason why they have had to do this.*⁵⁰

Ideology reigns over society and politics. In Piketty's critique of the ideology of meritocracy one finds a minor accounting of this power. But inasmuch as the liberal ideology—indeed, that of Piketty—also dissuades all forms of revolt and structural transformation, we recognize ideology as a major counterinsurgent force. Chapter 2 provides selections that contribute to an understanding of ideology today. Ideology is not the open questioning of philosophical inquiry. Ideology only comes onto the scene at the end of an inquiry, or worse, it is the preemptive strike against any inquiry at all. It offers a functional and finished worldview like eyeglasses that screen out facts that do not fit with one's preferred outlook. But these glasses are no simple accessory that can be taken off, for they have been etched onto the eyes of our subconscious.

To address such problems, it is necessary to diagnose them well, but ideology often functions as an impediment to the diagnostic process. When we speak of revolution, communism, capitalism, anarchism, ecology, racism, sexism, gender, and class composition, we quickly confront the many impasses of a concrete ideological blockade against any serious consideration of rival visions and arguments.

Moving on from theory and ideology to the key Marxian focus on class, we aim to account for developments and reconsiderations. For one, there is no agreement on what class is, or what exactly Marx understood it to be, or who was included in each, questions raised by Ralf Dahrendorf.⁵¹ Being what it may, class composition has changed, in both ideological and material terms. First, upward mobility has gone from marginal to nearly nonexistent, and has even reversed over the past several decades. Second, and in contradiction with the new reality, the ideology of mobility has only flourished and been expanded with new categories and expectations for short-term precarious work and demands for flexibility. This can be seen, for example, in the dangerous French *loi travail* in 2016. The brutal contradiction, or cognitive dissonance, summed up: less real mobility coupled with an expectation for greater mobility. This is only one feature of the class problem.

In Chapter 3, we present readings that help us explore what conventional class analysis misses and how to complicate and improve it in accordance with current conditions of life. The authors in this section offer a more nuanced analysis than Piketty in fundamental ways. As discussed, Piketty analyzes in great detail the difference and distance between income and national capital, showing that income inequality has reached dangerous levels. But class is not about income alone. It is about power, identity, material distribution, and exclusion, among other things.

Following this, we move on to other questions of exclusion and power beyond the theorization of class. Contrary to a now-old slander, revolutionary Marxists such as Sylvia Pankhurst, Rosa Luxemburg, C.L.R. James, Raya Dunayevskaya, and other revolutionary anticapitalists (e.g., Frantz Fanon, Lucy Parsons, Silvia Federici, Nancy Fraser, and Enrique Dussel) have *indeed* made major contributions to the expansion of class analysis with studies of race, gender, and sexuality. Nonetheless, we mustn't whitewash the historical tendency in Marxian (more so) and anarchist radical thought to treat these other categories as subordinate to class. One could even see in Lucy Parsons, who was far from the conventional Marxist, a kind of analytical class fundamentalism.

As a notable distinction, it is more common to find in the anarchist literature many influential women who directly took up women's issues in the early twentieth century, such as Charlotte Wilson, Emma Goldman, and Voltairine de Cleyre. Moreover, anarchist prison writings included remarkably rich encounters with impoverished and incarcerated populations across racial and ethnic divides. But for anarchists, it has been more characteristic to contrast the importance of individuals over and against the Marxian emphasis on class than it has been to shift the terrain from class to race and gender. The aim of Chapter 4 is to compensate for some of these deficits in the literature of radical undercurrents; to bring in some of the analyses of the colonial and postcolonial reality; and more broadly, to bring in thinkers from excluded demographics—as we do throughout the whole volume.

We would point out that the shortcomings of our milieu are far more catastrophic in the mainstream traditions of liberalism and conservatism. We point this out not to excuse the shortcomings of the radical milieu but, rather, to emphasize the overarching and growing racism and sexism of the main currents. This can be seen in many examples, such as the epidemic police murder of black men, the well-demonstrated racism of the carceral state, and the reductive conflation of feminism to a tepid politics of gender quotas.⁵² However, criticism leveled against radical theorists for overlooking issues of gender and sexism could be leveled far more severely and unsparingly at the whole history of Western philosophy.⁵³ And whereas renewed attention to income inequality has revitalized discussions on class and social stratification, it has not guaranteed renewed attention to feminist and antiracist critique.

Chapter 5 helps readers think through current problems in education and pedagogy and the role education plays in social and political transformation. In the anarchist tradition, going back at least to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, education was an integral part of social and political transformation. For example, he (and other anarchists like Charlotte Wilson and Errico Malatesta) preferred the idea of social revolution to the idea of political revolution, which

meant a transformation in and of the social body instead of in the political institutions of the state. Today, there are new challenges to consider in light of the global privatization of education, demanding new inroads into what Peter McLaren calls revolutionary critical pedagogy that need to be developed inside and outside institutional settings.

We think of education and pedagogy while continuing the discussion of ideology, theory, and class composition. A part of the concrete ideological problem we face derives from the fact that educational institutions have been captured by capital more fully (in some cases, totally) than at any point in history. Even public institutions, with long historical commitments to free schooling (e.g., the City University of New York and the University of California system), have shifted to private tuition revenues for their main operating budgets—a necessity created by systematic defunding.

But we know better than to expect states to put education in the service of social transformation. We cannot act as if decades of privatization had never occurred; nor can we ignore the fact that the best offer from Clinton-Democrat liberalism is to forgive student loan debts for young entrepreneurs.⁵⁴ This plan was rearticulated by the Clinton campaign with new energy in June 2016, making it loud and clear that the official liberal vision for public education is to continue instrumentalizing it for capitalist innovation. Neoliberalism has created a situation in which we must rethink education in noninstitutional terms, in new directions, and now, against the forces of education itself! We have got to find new ways of transforming education from a tool for capitalist assimilation into a transformative process of rethinking all that is.

Next, we focus on the importance of culture for radical politics. Let us drive the last nail into the coffin of old debates about cultural Marxism and postmodern theory versus materialist class politics. What we mean by culture is no joke or masturbatory abstraction. Culture is a complex of shared practices and discourses (ways of speaking and thinking), which are taught not by direct instruction but, rather, by socialization and acculturation (*cultivation*). Culture provides a shared sense of meaning for a life with others around you. The etymological origins of the word *culture* derive from the Latin *cultura* and first indicated cultivation in a mainly agricultural sense. We speak of cultivation in social and political senses.

In the Marxist tradition, much of culture is reduced to “the superstructure,” an epiphenomenon of the material bases of life. In the middle of the twentieth century, many Marxists revised the materialism that was developed as a philosophical riposte for G.W.F. Hegel. Critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, from Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer to Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse, and to related thinkers like Wilhelm Reich and Jürgen

Habermas, famously reintegrated the importance of culture with the Marxist critique of capitalism.

In the anarchist tradition, culture was recognized as a major battlefield for revolutionary activity. Emma Goldman wrote about drama, theater, and novels as inroads for radical criticism against capitalist ideology.⁵⁵ For Raoul Vaneigem, revolution needs poetry, and what he means by “poetry” is a form of cultural revolt.⁵⁶ To that end, Julia Kristeva writes about what she calls the “culture of revolt,” which she says must be fostered against the prevailing culture of privatization, alienation, and mass depression.⁵⁷ We agree. Culture is critical, even when its content is determined by capital and is itself a part of the problem. It cannot simply be marginalized as epiphenomenal to economic reality, as it mainly appears in both Marx and Piketty.

Closely linked to culture—one could say its constitutive parts—are literature and art, major conduits of cultural transmission. Art has been an integral component of every social movement, including labor and civil rights. It was through theater, literature, song, and more that popular analyses of class, race, gender, and oppression generally have been disseminated through the social body. The creative and participatory nature of art also increases activity, communicative power, and a collective sense of our affective and effective capabilities.

Our volume cannot be silent on the basic questions of ecology. We are convinced by the critical scholarship that *ecological capitalism* is a contradiction in terms. Some months before Rachel Carson published her *Silent Spring*, Murray Bookchin argued the more radical and convincing thesis that ecological principles are incompatible with contemporary capitalist society, and that our future survival on Earth would require a transition to anarchist social organization. Bookchin called this “social ecology.” Out of the Marxist tradition, James O’Connor claims that ecological crisis is the “natural disaster” of capitalism. The chapter on ecology informs new opportunities and an urgent need for ecological thinking connected to the abolitionist critique of existing society and life.

The theory of history and change known as *historical materialism* has been central to Marx and Marxism, developed as a basis for understanding the past, present, and future. Accordingly, history and change were to be understood in the context of class conflict and the resolution of contradictions and antagonisms. We claim that there are other ways to understand history and change that move beyond the limitations of historical materialism, which we think must inform the analysis and action of radicals.

Historical materialism has narrowed and governed the revolutionary interpretation of events. From 1871 to 1968 in France, to 1994 in Chiapas, 1999 in Seattle, 2001 in Genoa, 2011 in the Occupy movements, the so-

called Arab Spring, 2013 in Turkey, 2015 in Baltimore, and 2016 in France in Nuit Debout, among so many other revolts and locations, collective action appears a permanent part of the radical imagination. The old aspiration of collective action, from the standpoint of historical materialism, is for the grand antagonisms that could or would set the stage for revolution. But aren't there other ways to think about collective action beyond the context of world-historical transition? We believe so, and we offer some ideas.

It would be ideal if readers of Piketty's book would take up this book as a contrary accompaniment. It would be even better if our readers would take up the fuller and other works of the authors featured here as their interests lead them beyond the limitations of the present volume. We hope the book is successful as an introduction to important undercurrents in radical thought. Inasmuch as you are familiar with some of the authors herein, certainly there are others in the following pages to whom you are now being introduced.

One of our guiding ideas has been to bring together works that are typically separated along ideological lines, works that are considered disparate and not commonly grouped together. Some groupings of these texts may even feel inappropriate to those deeply familiar with internal debates and irreconcilable differences. If so, we will be glad. We have assembled this hybridization so that its disparate contents may inform each other richly, convinced that they possess a special utility for constructing transformative theory for the twenty-first century.

Whatever limitations of the present volume, its purpose is to contest the normalized acceptance of capitalism indefinitely.

You may say, "Yes, the reader is full of good ideas that traverse a wide range of thinking, but it's also all too similar. All these authors desire an end to the present state of affairs, and they all dream of something new." You may also ask, "Where is the real diversity, the one that would include a defense of capital and the existing world order? Where is the other side?" To this we would point out that the defense of capital and the existing world order is already all around you, in the architecture, culture, ideology, work, academy, media, politics, and materiality of everyday life. If the side you are looking for is the side that accepts the existing reality, then you can close this book and find it everywhere. That our book aspires to something else is what, fundamentally, distinguishes it from Piketty's. This is a book of *other sides*—indeed, the missing sides we should be demanding.

NOTES

1. Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916–1935*, ed. David Forgacs (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 32–36.

2. *Ibid.*, 33.

3. *Ibid.*, 34.

4. See, e.g., Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

5. Although Bernie Sanders shared some of Piketty's ideas on the social state and taxation, for doing so, he was a real nuisance to the Democratic Party, which ultimately could not tolerate him. It was even revealed in a WikiLeaks release of private e-mails that the Clinton campaign was conspiring with the Democratic National Convention (DNC) to defeat Sanders in the primary.

6. Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, in *The Portable Karl Marx*, ed. Eugene Kamenka (New York: Penguin, 1983), 179 (emphasis in original).

7. Richard Gilman-Opalsky is, for example, deeply critical of anarchists and anarchism in *Specters of Revolt: On the Intellect of Insurrection and Philosophy from Below* (London: Repeater Books, 2016), as is John Asimakopoulos in *Social Structures of Direct Democracy* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016).

8. For two prominent examples of nonanarchist antistatistism from revolutionary trajectories, see, for example, Cornelius Castoriadis, *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy: Essays in Political Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

9. In fact, many Left sectarian fights have been more vitriolic than those between them and their capitalist adversaries. Famous examples include the bitter conflict between Marx and Bakunin, individualist anarchists versus social movement anarchists, state socialists versus Left communists, and so on.

10. In the excerpted pieces in this book, to avoid distracting readers, we have generally chosen not to mark omitted original text with ellipses. Excerpted pieces are specified as such in the notes crediting the original source for each.

11. Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 1.

12. Lawrence Summers and James Galbraith were two "high-profile" economist critics of Piketty on methodological and theoretical issues, respectively, and the *Financial Times* published numerous articles criticizing Piketty's analysis and recommendations.

13. Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, 10.

14. *Ibid.*, 229–230.

15. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League," March 1850, available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/communist-league/1850-ad1.htm>.

16. *Liberalism* has different meanings depending on the discipline or context. For example, sociologically or culturally, it advocates greater government regulation, more democracy, and some conception of social justice. The community has as much an obligation to the individual as he or she has to the community. In economics and conservative politics, liberalism indicates liberty *from* government. We use (*neo*)liberal to indicate the development in the second half of the twentieth century according to which liberals and conservatives alike largely came to accept the neoliberal notion that freedom *from* government was the political-economic ideal par excellence. That ideal was cultivated within the context of Cold War ideology.

17. Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, 296.

18. *Ibid.*, 20.

19. Of course, people often do the same with other terms of abuse like *democracy*, *communism*, and *anarchy*.

20. David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2011), 345.

21. Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, 47.

22. Ibid.
23. Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: International, 1997), 78.
24. Familial-vocational privatism refers to the privatization of social life, according to which individuals are led to focus on the private spheres of their immediate family and work. For an extensive discussion, see Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975) for an analysis of this process of capitalist acculturation.
25. Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, 64.
26. Ibid., 122.
27. Ibid., 186–187.
28. Ibid., 416.
29. Karl Marx, “Crisis Theory,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert Tucker, (New York: Norton, 1978), 444.
30. Ibid., 443–444.
31. Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, 471.
32. Ibid., 472.
33. Ibid., 479.
34. Ibid., 485.
35. Ibid., 493.
36. See Silvia Federici, *Revolution and Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012); and John Holloway, *Crack Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2010).
37. Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, 518.
38. See Sylvain Cypel, “Why French Workers Are So Mad,” *New York Times*, June 8, 2016, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/09/opinion/why-french-workers-are-so-mad.html>.
39. Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, 531.
40. Piketty, 531–532.
41. Neoconservative Francis Fukuyama famously argued that history ended in the end of the Cold War:

What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government. This is not to say that there will no longer be events to fill the pages of Foreign Affairs’ yearly summaries of international relations, for the victory of liberalism has occurred primarily in the realm of ideas or consciousness and is as yet incomplete in the real or material world. But there are powerful reasons for believing that it is the ideal that will govern the material world in the long run.

Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): 3.

42. For an excellent elaboration on the question of fascism and capitalism, see the essay in this volume by Angela Mitropoulos (Chapter 9.4).

43. J. V. Stalin, “Dialectical and Historical Materialism,” September, 1938, available at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1938/09.htm>.

44. Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, 549.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., 571.

47. Ibid.

48. *Ibid.*, 577.

49. John Holloway, *In, Against, and Beyond Capitalism: The San Francisco Lectures* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016), 32.

50. Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938), 112–113 (emphasis in original).

51. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959).

52. On these specific issues, the work of Angela Y. Davis is essential. See, for example, Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983); Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003); and Angela Y. Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016).

53. See, for example, Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979).

54. Patrick Healy, “Hillary Clinton to Offer Plan on Paying College Tuition without Needing Loans,” *New York Times*, August 10, 2015, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/10/us/politics/hillary-clinton-to-offer-plan-on-paying-college-tuition-without-needing-loans.html>.

55. Emma Goldman, “The Drama: A Powerful Disseminator of Radical Thought,” in *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Dover, 1969).

56. See, for example, Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (London: Rebel Press, 2006), chap. 20.

57. Julia Kristeva, *The Sense and Non-sense of Revolt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

1 | Theory/Praxis

The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism of the weapon, material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses.

—Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right"*

Revolutions are true as movements and false as regimes.

—Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*

1.1 Think Hope, Think Crisis

JOHN HOLLOWAY

I

A kiss. June 2013. The kiss of a young couple sitting in a burned-out bus being used as a barricade against the police in Taksim Square in the center of Istanbul.

Syntagma Square, Athens, on June 15, 2011: as the police attack time and time again and hurl canister after canister of tear gas, a group of musicians play their bouzoukis in the center of the square, gas masks on their faces.

A silent march by twenty thousand indigenous peasants in San Cristóbal and five other towns on December 21, 2012, in which each one in turn mounts a podium, raises his or her fist, and comes down again to make room for the next. Not a word, but the strength and the anger are clear.

"The Beginning Is Near" (a placard in the Oakland General Strike, November 2, 2011).

Explosions of rage and hope. Lightning flashes. Fireworks that light up the night sky. Enough! *¡Ya basta!* Ruptures, events, experiences of unitary time-space, orgasms, sunbursts, now-times, eruptions of the Not Yet, moments of excess, instants of mutual recognition, impossibilities made possible, festivals of disobedience. The bile of oppression vomited. Hope mixed with tear gas and turmoil. Athens, Istanbul, Stockholm, Rio de Janeiro, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Sofia, London, Paris, New York, Frankfurt, Tokyo, Cairo, and the list goes on and on.

Start from there. Think rupture. Think rage. Think hope.

Think from there. Think from there because that is where we are. Living in an epoch of riots, but not just that: these are *our* riots, *our* fury, *our* desperate hope that a different world can still be possible. No neutrality, no objectivity, no standing outside, at a distance: this is *our* hope, *our* anger, *our* possibility of living. First person, not third.

Think from there because it is a special vantage point. These explosions are sunbursts that pierce the gloom, dissolve the rigidities of everyday thought, allow us to see that which could not be seen before, to think that which was unthinkable.

Think from there because we need to think. Everything that is happening tells us that we have not thought enough. The turning of the Arab Spring into the grotesque sentencing to death of hundreds of activists in Cairo tells us that we have not thought enough. The fact that in Greece wave after wave of protest and creative action have not succeeded in halting the austerity measures or the increasing repression or the rise of fascism, tells us that we do not have the answers, that we must think, think, think.

Think, think, think, as well because we are in the university, and that is what universities are about, or should be. To come to the university and say “Think Hope, Think Crisis” means that I think that is what we should be doing in the universities: thinking our way toward a new world before this one destroys us completely.

Rage into hope: that is what we must think. Rage is everywhere and growing: rage against the obscenity of capitalism; rage against inequality; rage against the power of money, the destruction of nature, of communities, of lives; rage that springs from frustration, the frustration of unemployment and the frustration of employment. Righteous, righteous rage, but rage is dangerous if it confronts an unmovable object, a brick wall of *that’s the way things are*. If there is no way forward, hope falls away, and rage goes sour: How else do we explain the rise of the extreme right in Europe and the United States? How else do we explain the tragedy of Mexico today?

Think rage into hope: rage against the present world of destruction into hope that we can create a world that we ourselves determine, a world that will not be shaped by the blind logic of money, of capital.

Think hope, then. This hope is not the quiet sister of faith and charity but the cutting edge of rage, moving against the positivist “that’s the way things are,” opening paths toward different worlds. This hope has tears in its eyes. Tears from the tear gas of repression, tears from the pain of the world, tears because sometimes it seems that it is vanishing, evaporating, that just when hope is most needed, when capitalism is at its most awful, most destructive, when rage is on the rise, the hope of creating a different world is fading.

II

To think hope is to confront a tormented question: After so many failures, so many bloody massacres, with so many in prison, how do we, the losers of always, dare to think that it is still possible to create a radically different world?

Perhaps it doesn't matter. Perhaps we don't need to have hope of a different world. Perhaps it is enough just to struggle against the forces of destruction, confident that at least we will lose with dignity, and at least our struggle may make things a little bit better. We can be anticapitalist just because that is what our humanity demands, but without any real expectation that we can one day overcome capitalism.

And yet, I think the great disillusion of the last part of the twentieth century, the loss of what might be called the grand narrative of communism, can have terrible consequences. Certainly *I* want more. I want some hope that we can really break capital, that we can really break the dynamic within which we seem to be entrapped, simply because that dynamic is leading us to ever greater barbarity and possibly the total destruction of humans along with many other forms of life on this planet. We need to win more than particular victories, we need a total transformation of the organization and therefore the dynamic of society. But how can we think that sort of hope?

"Now is the time to learn hope," Ernst Bloch told us when he returned to Germany after the Second World War from exile in the United States. We can learn much from him. He showed us the power of the Not Yet in all aspects of human life and thought. But that was sixty years ago, when the Soviet Union and the communist parties still stood for many as a symbol of hope, an illusion of hope, which we have now discarded. How do we relearn hope now after so many disappointments?

III

The hope that we can create a radically different form of society implies some sort of historicity—that is, the understanding that this system in which we live is historically specific, that it has not always existed and that there is no reason to think that it will exist forever.

This does not mean that history is on our side, that there is some sort of trajectory that is leading us inevitably or almost automatically to a better form of social organization. After Auschwitz and Hiroshima, it is impossible to maintain that there is going to be a happy ending for sure. Everything suggests rather that history is a train rushing us toward our doom and that revolution means pulling the emergency brake, as Walter Benjamin put it.¹ And yet our capacity or incapacity to pull the emergency brake is also a question of

history, of a latent counterhistory. Our ability to stop present history depends on the subterranean growth of our capacities to create a different world, a world yet unborn. Hope is the push of the unborn world.

To think hope is to read the existing world from the push of the world that is unborn, from the present existence of that which does not yet exist but exists not yet as struggle, as potential. The explosions with which we began are not isolated events but eruptions of a much deeper movement, the thrust of the Not Yet, the unborn world against and beyond the world that exists, against and beyond capital.

The telluric movement of the Not Yet is all around us. In *Crack Capitalism* I talk about the millions of ways in which people break the logic of capital and therefore of capitalist labor (alienated or abstract labor) and develop alternative ways of doing things and coming together, and I suggest that these could be seen as cracks in the texture of capitalist domination. There is a very real weaving of a different world (or, better, weavings of different worlds) going on, in so many millions of ways, weavings that push against and beyond capitalism. The only way in which revolution can be conceived today is in terms of the recognition, creation, expansion, multiplication, and confluence of these cracks or weavings.

And yet (years after that book was published!) capitalism is still here, and becoming more and more awful. It seems to be an immovable object. We tell it to go away, but it just does not listen. With all our protests and our building of alternative ways of doing things, we often feel that we are banging our heads on a brick wall. The night is darkest just before dawn, of course, but it would help if we could see some fragility in the system.

IV

Bloch argued that the subjective force of our hoping has to be able to find a hopeability in the object, a corresponding weakness. By *object* here I understand not a thing but capitalism, the totality of capitalist social relations. This is what confronts us all the time. In the Sierra Norte of Puebla, for example, where there is a massive movement of resistance against the so-called Projects of Death, the destruction of the land by mining developments and dams, the enemy is not just the particular companies or the government that supports them, but the whole dynamic of profit at all costs. It seems that the whole dynamic of the world stands against our particular struggles. Or think of Greece: the enemy there is not just the government or the troika but the dynamic of money. The push of the unborn world must find in the existing world, in the totality of capitalist social relations, a structural weakness, a

fault line. When we scream in protest, we want to hear an echo inside the wall that we are screaming at.

This is the central argument of Marx. We have to move beyond timeless hoping to understand the fragility of capitalism. This fragility is focused in crisis. Marxism, as I understand it, *is* a theory of crisis. Historicity implies a notion of crisis, a moment in which the relations of the old world are broken and the new patterns push through. Marx connects this mortality of capital with the recurrent disruptions that are typical of capitalist development. In crisis our subjective hoping (our subjective creating of a different world, our struggles against capitalism) meets the hopeability, the fragility or breakability of capitalism. Each crisis is a breaking of the relations of the old world and a real or potential pushing forward of the relations of a new world. “Think hope, think crisis” is a challenge for us to ask, “In what sense can we say that the present crisis is a breaking of the relations of the old world and a pushing forward of the relations of a new world?”

In crisis, hope meets hopeability. We should be dancing for joy and laughing at the moment, seeing the difficulties of capital. But are we? Yes and no. There is certainly an element of joyous rage, a celebration of hope—in Argentina, Greece, Turkey. Chapuling. But the more established image of crisis is just the opposite: a period of depression. We speak of the last great crisis of capitalism as the Great Depression.

Greece is the perfect example. The most ferocious attack by capital in any so-called advanced country in recent years has been confronted by the most militant left in Europe with massive demonstration after massive demonstration, with violent confrontations with the police, a huge number of buildings in the city burned, the imaginative creation of all sorts of cracks, prefigurations of another world, and what has been the reaction of the Greek and other states and indeed of capital in general as expressed through the money markets? None, total closure, total autism, just as if all the struggles had never taken place, as if the protesters were no more than flies to be swatted away or put in prison. And now we have, on the side of capital, the return to the bond market, to capitalist respectability, and on our side, possibly the spread of depression as the difficult conditions of life gain hold. Where is hope there? Where is the fragility of capital? What we see here is the arrogance and violence of capital.

To think hope is to think from the push of the unborn world. To think crisis is to think from the fragility of the old world, that putrid world that has already gone well past its sell-by date. But the meeting of the two does not seem to work. And yet it has to work: the push for a new world has to meet the fragility of the old one if revolution is to be possible.

V

Can Marx help us here? Perhaps not in his presentation of crisis in *Capital*, which makes the crisis seem external to us, but yes, in the substance of what he says. My understanding of Marx on crisis is that he is saying that capital as a historically specific mode of domination (and in distinction from other modes of domination) suffers from a crucial illness that constitutes its ferocity, its instability, and its mortality. That illness is its own insatiability, the chronic, convulsive, and growing inadequacy of its own domination over the world.

All forms of domination suffer from a chronic problem: the dependence of the rulers on the ruled, their dependence on being able to make the ruled do what the rulers want them to. In capitalism, that dependence acquires a new dimension: from being a constant problem, it becomes a real illness. Unlike other forms of domination, capital is unable to exist on the basis of a stable relation of domination/exploitation. To reproduce itself, it must constantly intensify its domination/exploitation. The fact that it is not able to do so adequately constitutes its crisis.

In *Capital*, Marx introduces this constant drive to intensify by saying that value is measured by the socially necessary labor time required to produce a commodity. This socially necessary labor time is constantly falling, so there is a constant reformulation of the labor necessary to produce value, what Marx calls “abstract labor,” a constant restructuring of the conversion of our human activity into labor that produces capital or supports the production of capital. Value, the structuring of social relations on the basis of exchange, involves a constantly intensifying attack on human activity and on the whole pattern of social relations and relations between humans and nature of which that activity is part. This comes up against constant resistance, resistance that can easily overflow into rebellion. Capital flees into machinery, to replace the refractory hand of labor, as Marx puts it, but this is no solution, because capital then has to intensify exploitation in order to cover the costs of the machines. Capital’s inability to do so sufficiently leads, Marx argues, to the tendency for the rate of profit to fall and to crisis—both as the chronic inadequacy of capital’s exploitation (i.e., capital’s capacity to subordinate human activity to its needs) and as the periodic explosion of this inadequacy as the rupture of existing social relations and the struggle by capital to restructure them according to its needs. Crisis as chronic inadequacy merges in modern capitalism into the periodic disruption, so that the term “the current crisis of capitalism” comes (at least since the mid-1970s) to refer to a chronic condition punctuated by intensifications.

I do not mean that capital’s control over the world is weakening—quite the contrary, unfortunately—but that, at the same time as its control is grow-

ing, this control is increasingly inadequate to ensure its own reproduction. Growing domination coincides with growing inadequacy of domination. This seems to me what Marx was expressing in his insistence in *Capital* that a growing mass of profit coincides with a falling rate of profit. It is important to keep both of these trends in view: if we see only the growing domination of capital, this can easily lead us to despair, but if we see only the growing inadequacy of that domination, that can lead us to an unjustified optimism. Hope and pessimism walk hand in hand: read Bloch with one eye and Adorno with the other.

Keep the two together, but perhaps we need to focus more on the inadequacy of capitalist domination, for we are that inadequacy; we are the crisis of capital. We are the crisis of capital, and proud of it. It is our resistance, our rebellion, our refusal to be converted into machines, our laughter, our love, our friendship, our drive to do things in a different way, to emancipate our creative capacities, our force of production from the logic of capital: it is all that stands in the way of capital's desperate drive to intensify its domination of all human life.

We are the crisis of capital, and what does capital do to overcome its crisis? First, it does everything possible to intensify its control over us, over our daily activity, over the world in which we live. But second, it is forced to recognize that even with this intensification, even with all it has achieved in the destruction of humanity and the destruction of the planet, it is not enough. For the last eighty years or so, but to an ever-increasing extent, this recognition of its own inadequacy has become a central characteristic of the existence of capital. The recognition of the inadequacy of its rule takes the form of a game of "let's pretend": "let's pretend that our domination of human activity is sufficient to allow us to accumulate more and more capital; let's create a monetary representation that corresponds to this world that we desire; let's expand credit and keep going that way." A fictitious world is created that is always a bet on the future production of the surplus value that might justify the bet, a bet on being able to exploit more effectively, on being able to subordinate all human activity more effectively to the logic of capital. But even with all the victories of capital in recent years, this expectation has not been fully realized, so the fictitious world grows and grows and grows. And as it grows it becomes more unstable, more volatile, more violent, more prone to convulsions that hit the people of different parts of the planet more or less at random: Greece again, of course, or Spain, Ireland, Italy, Argentina, and so on and on, more and more. A nasty, fictitious world of debt that has seeped into all our lives, keeps us awake at night, and—absurdity of absurdities—now constitutes a central part of the experience of university education in more and more countries.

We are the inadequacy of capital; we are its crisis. Our insubordination resonates within capital as its crisis. The problem is that the echo of our strength comes back at us as something alien. We go into a cave and call out, and a multitude of voices come back at us: we do not know that it is our echo and are terrified and fall on our knees and cry out for mercy. That is what happens to us in crisis: our own insubordination comes back at us as a terrifying alien force, and we bow down. What should be an experience of laughter and joy turns into one of terror.

Our hope, the hope that drives millions of struggles in all the world, the hope that drives the millions of weavings of another world, meets the hopeability-fragility of the world in the crisis of capital and does not recognize it, does not recognize it as its own product, as the result of the coming together of millions of resistances in all the world.

What can we do to change this, to bring about a self-recognition? And how could we express this self-recognition practically in such a way as to strengthen the movement of hope, hope in our ability to create a very different world? I do not have the answer, but I do think it is important. Crisis comes at us as necessity, as a force that imposes discipline, as a force that makes us long for normal relations of domination. We have to find a way of expressing it as the expression of our own strength and humanity.

If it sometimes seems that the complete disappearance of capitalism is still a long way off, it is even clearer that capital is very far from having resolved its crisis. This does not mean a smooth transition—just the opposite. Capital, if it continues to exist, is likely to be wracked by ever more violent crises, ever more desperate attempts to make real its fictional domination of the world. Our struggle is to make clear that its weakness is our strength and to use that strength to weave and weave and weave the different worlds that could yet burst through the disaster that is capitalism.

This is the dangerous ground on which hope exists. That is why we need to think hope, think crisis.

NOTE

1. Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Suhrkamp, 1977), 1:1232.

1.2 The New Spaces of Freedom

FÉLIX GUATTARI

We might refuse to resign ourselves to it, but we know for a fact that both in the East and in the majority of the third world rights and liberties

are subject to the discretionary powers of the political forces in charge of the state. Yet we are not so ready to admit, and often refuse to confront, the fact that they are equally threatened in the West, in countries that like to call themselves “champions of the free world.”

This hard question, so close to the skin and pregnant with dramatic human implications, is hardly resolved if we remain at a level of statements of principle. It would be impossible to fail to recognize the fact that for a dozen years a whole bundle of rights and freedoms and a whole series of spaces of freedom continued to lose ground in Europe. If we consider what is happening to immigrants and the distortions that the right to political asylum is undergoing in France alone this fact is manifestly unequivocal. But the defeat stares us in the face even when detached from mere narrow jurisprudence, when considering the actual evolution of the “right” to dispose of basic material means of survival and labor for millions of people in Europe (the unemployed, young and old people, the precarious); the “right to difference” for all kinds of minorities; and the “right” to effective democratic expression for the large majority of peoples. Militants might object that the conflicts related to formal juridical freedoms should not be treated on par with the conquest of new spaces of freedom because only the latter is relevant to concrete struggles (to be fair, this reaction is reminiscent of an era that has long gone). Justice never kept out of the social fray (it never stood over and above social struggles); democracy was always more or less manipulated; there is nothing, no greatness, to be expected from the realm of formal juridical freedom, while, on the contrary, everything is still to be done when it comes to new spaces of freedom. As far as I’m concerned, after taking an interest in the extradition cases and political trials of Franco “Bifo” Berardi, Klaus Croissant, Franco Piperno, Lafranco Pace, François Pain, Toni Negri, and others, I was forced to revise my opinion on the importance of these supposedly formal freedoms. Today they seem to me almost completely inseparable from other freedoms “on the ground,” to speak like the ethnologists. Now more than ever we must refuse to remain at the level of a global denunciation of bourgeois justice: doing so would be formal indeed. The independence of the judiciary is often really nothing but a decoy; instead of resigning to this and returning to a mythology of spontaneity and the so-called people’s tribunals, we should think of ways to make it actual. The specialization of social functions and the division of labor are what they are; besides, nothing would seem to justify any expectations of deep changes in public opinion in the short or medium term, and there is no way of hoping that organized societies will manage to do without a judicial apparatus any time soon! This does not mean that we have to accept it as it is, quite the opposite: it is crucial to redefine its mode of development, its competences, its means, and its possible

articulations in a democratic environment. To do so, struggles for freedoms must also be given new instruments to take us forward:

1. Ad hoc interventions in practical affairs where rights and freedoms are undermined
2. Longer-term activities, such as liaising with groups of lawyers, magistrates, social workers, and prisoners, in view of developing alternative forms of systems of justice

The struggles that defend the respect of the law and the offensive struggles aimed at conquering new realms of freedom are complementary. Both are set to become at least as important as trade union and political struggles, and to influence them more and more. This is the process that is apparently unfolding in France, with the growing role played by organizations such as Amnesty International, the League of Human Rights, France Terre d'Asile, and the Cimade.

Despite the above premises, we still cannot treat the evolution of freedoms in Europe as something in itself separate from the context of international tensions and world economic crises. But as soon as I mention these two things, a new question starts humming in my ears. Should we regard these tensions and crises as *causes* of the weakening of freedoms or, inversely, as the *outcome* of the rise of conservatism and reactionarism that followed the 1960s wave of struggles for freedoms? What I'd like to demonstrate is that our analysis of the tension between East and West and the world crisis would gain considerable ground if we reconsidered them from the perspective of this question on freedoms.

I sometimes wonder whether in our societies, imprudently known as “postindustrial,” these freedoms are not destined to be irreversibly eroded by some kind of global rise in the entropy of social control. But this morose sociology earns me nothing but days of depression! On dispassionate reflection, I see no reason to blame this repression on the proliferation of the mechanisms of information and communication in the machineries of production and social life. No! What distorts everything is something else! It is not techno-scientific “progress” but the inertia of outmoded social relations: international relations between blocs and this permanent arms race that sucks the blood out of the economy and anesthetizes its spirits! So I would be inclined to say that the international tension is probably less the result of a fundamental antagonism between two superpowers—as we are led to believe—than a means for them to actually “discipline” the planet. In short, two chief gendarmes hold complementary roles, but not as in a puppet show, because here the blows really hurt! So the overall tension of the system

grows and the hierarchical elements of its military, economic, social, and cultural wings become exacerbated. Up there, in the Olympus of the Gods of War, much noise and many threats are made—as well as, unfortunately, many very dangerous things too!—so that at the bottom, at all levels, the flunkies are kept silent!

In this respect, the defense of individual and collective freedoms never was a serious issue in the conflict-ridden relations between the East and the West, and this is indicative. With proclamations and the parading of great principles put aside, it becomes apparent how little this issue weighs on the important international “deals” (President Jimmy Carter managed to ridicule himself before the American political class by insisting more than was customary on this subject!). Western leaders would easily accommodate themselves to the techniques of the totalitarian bureaucracy of the Eastern bloc. And, under surface appearances and behind the ideological and strategic hype, they seem to be carrying out similar policies and share the same set of objectives: namely to control individuals and social groups more and more closely and to normalize and integrate them, if possible facing no resistance from them and without them even realizing it—making use of collective infrastructures for their formation and “maintenance,” of the media to model their thinking and imaginary, and (no doubt in the future) of some sort of permanent computer radio control to allocate a territorial residence and economic trajectory to each one of them. The outcome is there; we can already see it! That is, a growing segregation that generates ethnic, sexual, and age discrimination, greater freedom of action for the cast of bosses and managers, and more subservience from the pawns at the foundations of the big capitalist game. The decline of freedoms affecting more or less the whole world is mainly due to the growth of more conservative and functionalist conceptions of the world. These are reactionary but always ready to seize the “progress” of science and technique, to put it at their service. We need to realize that this repression was made possible only by the political conjunction of the Western bourgeoisie, “socialist” bureaucracies, and the corrupt “elites” of the third world, which together form a new figure of capitalism that I elsewhere define as “Integrated World Capitalism.”¹

The crisis and freedoms—of course they are related! Economic anxiety in itself weighs heavily on the spirits; it inhibits all desire for contestation and can even encourage paradoxical results, such as the shift of a fraction of the communist electorate toward Jean-Marie Le Pen’s National Front in France. But, even so, isn’t the presentation of this problem in the mainstream mass media largely distorted? Is this crisis weighing on our freedoms, or rather, is it collective passivity, demoralization, disorientation, and the lack of organization of potentially innovative forces to leave the field open for a

new “wild capitalism” to convert profit into socially devastating effects? On the one hand, the term *crisis* is particularly ill-suited to denote the nature of the series of catastrophes that has been shaking the world, and primarily the third world, for the past ten years. On the other hand, it would be completely illegitimate to circumscribe these phenomena to the economic sphere alone. Hundreds of millions of human beings are starving to death, billions of individuals are sinking into misery and despair year after year, and this is presented and explained to us as an economic problem that cannot be forecasted until the end of the crisis! Nothing can be done about it! This crisis falls from the sky; it comes and goes, like the hail of Hurricane Hortense! Only the omens—these famous and distinguished economists—could possibly have something to say about it. But if there is a place where absurdity turns into infamy, this is it! Because in the end, what need would there be to associate industrial and economic restructuring—applied on a world scale and engaged in the deepest reorganization of the means of production and society—with such a mess? We need a 180-degree turn in the way we think through these problems, and urgently. The political takes precedence over the economic, not the other way around! Even though under present circumstances it would be difficult to assert that the political manufactures the crisis from scratch—insofar as it produces similar effects and catastrophic interactions that people no longer control, for example, between economic devastations and environmental disasters, or, in another realm, between the monetary system and the oil market—there isn’t much more to be held responsible for the most pernicious social effects. And the end of the crisis, or, if you prefer, of this series of disasters, either will be political and social or won’t happen at all, and humanity will continue to make her way toward who knows what last implosion! Where does Europe stand in all this? Europe is often held up as a land of freedom and culture, so its vocation ought to be to stabilize relations between the East and the West and initiate the promotion of a new international order between the North and the South. While it is true that its German side recently started revealing all its interests in calming things down, we are still very far from an autonomous and coherent European policy. All the more so as France retreats into its traditional role of the Don Quixote of the protection of Western progress! In fact, Europe’s freedom to act reduces, like shagreen, as it becomes more apparent that Europe is not going to emerge unscathed from this huge attempt at restructuring of world capitalism. Europe’s feet and hands remain tied to the economic and monetary axiomatic strategy of the United States. More than ever, Europe is entangled in what the technocrats claim to be nationalist and statist “archaisms” and all sorts of “corporatism.” In order to develop a unitary movement within the people whom it is meant to unite, the European Economic

Community has unearthed and deepened the very hatreds we thought had died out for a long time, and to make matters worse the whole of its Mediterranean flank slowly shifts toward an intermediary kind of third world status.

Freedom is a right, above all! But not a vested right, at least. Concrete freedoms keep fluctuating along the path of power relations according to whether they are renounced or reaffirmed. In this respect, to avoid generalities and abstractions, it would be better to talk about *degrees of freedom* or, rather, about *differential coefficients of freedom*. Human freedom has never existed all in one piece. Even in the borderline case of the solitude of ivory towers, freedom is only established in relation to others—starting from the blocks of identity interjected in the self. In practice, freedoms only unravel in relation to the rights established with close friends and neighbors, in relation to the subordination of those who are in my power, to the effects of intimidation and influence of the authorities that dominate me and, finally, in relation to the rules, codes, and laws of different public domains. Just as the status of free citizen was established on the background of generalized slavery in ancient times, so do the freedoms of European white adults with a minimum income at their disposal find their “standing” on the ground of the enslavement of the third world today, both internally and externally. That is to say, in France, for instance, the most elementary wish to defend the rights of immigrants or protect the right to political asylum, even if devoid of outdated political theories or emanating from simple charity, could end up taking us very far because it puts under question not only the respect of formal rights but a whole conception of the world, of crucial axioms of segregation, racism, withdrawal, ideology of security, and the perspective of a Europe of police rather than a Europe of freedoms.

Respect of human rights in the East as in the West, in the North as in the South; peace and disarmament imposed on states through new waves of “pacifist demoralization”;² the establishment, among the wealthy third world countries, of relations that share the goal of contributing to the development of human potential: these could be the main international axes of a new social practice for the emancipation and conquest of spaces of freedoms. But these issues cannot feed into a body of meaningful struggles unless those who wish to act on them in practice appreciate the double nature of the obstacles that integrated world capitalism opposes to their project—namely:

1. An objective adversity that is constantly evolving due to the accelerated transformations of means of production and social relations
2. A subjective stupefaction and a veritable industrial production of individual and collective subjectivity, that ensures the most formidable efficiency and obedience

Before going any further I now wish to recall the conditions that future militant actions and machines of struggle for peace and freedom in all their forms need to be ready for. In my opinion—and I do not claim to have an exhaustive definition and a proposal that is “ready to go”—we need to draw some lessons from the auspicious period of the 1960s and the defeat that followed it. We were naïve, disorganized, indiscriminate, and well informed, sometimes sectarian and narrow-minded, but often visionaries and oriented toward the future; obviously a future that would not resemble the image of our dreams! But I am convinced that we are faced again with a set of problems of method reminiscent of the ones of the struggles and organization of those times, and some lessons can be drawn from experience, the experiences to which some people sacrificed their best years. I see these conditions as follows:

1. New social practices of liberation will not establish hierarchical relations between themselves; their development will answer to a principle of *transversality* that will enable them to be established by “traversing,” as a “rhizome,” heterogeneous social groups and interests. The pitfalls to avoid are these:
 - a. The reconstitution of “vanguard” and major state parties that dictate their law and mold their collective desires in a way that parallels—though formally antagonizes—that of a dominant system. The inefficiency and pernicious character of this kind of dispositif is no longer in need of demonstration.
 - b. The compartmentalization of militant practices and the singling out and separation between practices with political objectives of different scope, from the defense of sectarian interests to the transformation of everyday life . . . and the separation between, on the one hand, programmatic and theoretical reflection and, on the other hand, an analytics of subjectivity of groups and individuals concretely engaged in action, which is to be invented from scratch.

This character of transversality of new social practices—the refusal of authoritarian disciplines, formal hierarchies, orders of priorities decreed from above, and compulsory ideological references—should not be seen in contradiction with the obviously inevitable, necessary, and desirable establishment of *centers of decision* that use the most sophisticated technologies of communication and aim to maximum efficaciousness if necessary. The whole question here is to promote analytical collective procedures

that allow for the dissociation of *the work of decision* from the *imaginary investments of power*; these only coincide in capitalist subjectivity because the latter lost its dimensions of singularity and converted into what might be called an Eros of equivalence (little does it matter the nature of my power, since I dispose of a certain capital of abstract power).

2. One of the main goals of new social practices of liberation will be the development of more than a simple protection: collective and/or individual *processes of singularization*. These are meant to include everything that confers to these initiatives a character of living subjectivation and irreplaceable experience that is worth being lived, that gives meaning to life. After iron decades of Stalinism, numerous returns to power of the social democrats—with the self-same scenario of compromise, spinelessness, impotence, and defeat—and the narrow-minded and dishonest Boy Scout attitude of small groups, militancy ended up being impregnated with a rancid smell of church that has come to arouse a legitimate movement of rejection. Only its reinvention of new themes that start from a dissident subjectivity carried out by groups-subjects will make it possible to conquer again the abandoned terrains currently left to the prefabricated subjectivities of the media and infrastructures of this new-look capitalism. And here we reiterate the need to invent a collective analytics of different forms of “engaged” subjectivities. In this respect, we do not start completely from scratch. We have much to learn from the way the Greens in Germany or Solidarnosc in Poland have successfully managed to build new forms of militant life. We also have negative and inverse examples, such as the sectarianism of the Basque military ETA or the monstrous terrorist and dogmatic deviations of the Red Brigades in Italy that have inexorably led to the decapitation of the movement of liberation that had indisputably been the richest and most promising in Europe.

I repeat: the only means to avoid this deadly calamity is to provide the means of an analytical management of the processes of singularization or the “making dissidence” of subjectivity.

3. These mutating militant machines for transversal and singularized spaces of freedom will not have any claim to durability. This way, they will come to terms with their intrinsic precariousness and the need for their continuous renewal, supported by a long-lasting social movement of great scope.

This will lead them to forge *new and large alliances* that will make them avoid their most serious infantile disease: a tenacious propensity to experiencing oneself as a minority under siege. Here it is a case of promoting a logic of multivalent alliances that avoid both the duplicitous combinations of power and the purist and sectarian dynamics of the movements of the 1960s that led to its definitive separation from the population en masse. They will need to be sufficiently transversal and open to be able to communicate with social groups whose preoccupations, styles, and points of view are very remote from theirs. This will be possible only insofar as they will take responsibility for their finitude and their singularity, and they will free themselves from the perverse myth of the *seizing of state power* by a vanguard party, without appeal or reservations.

Nobody will seize power in the name of the oppressed! Nobody will confiscate freedoms in the name of freedom. The only acceptable objective now is the seizing of society by society itself.³ The state! That is another problem. One should not oppose it in a frontal way, nor flirt with its degeneration to smooth the way of tomorrow's socialism! In a sense, we have the state we deserve! By this I mean that the state is what remains as the most abject form of power when society has offloaded its collective responsibility. And time will not win over this monstrous secretion by itself; it is primarily organized practices that will enable society to disengage from the collective infantilism to which the media and capitalist infrastructures have condemned it. The state is no exterior monster that one needs to either flee or subdue. It is, starting from ourselves, at the root of our unconscious. We must "do with" it. It is an incontrovertible fact of our life and of our struggle.

Transversality, singularization, and new alliances: here are the three ingredients that I would like to see poured profusely into the pot of freedoms. Then we can see the famous "immaturity" of Europe and its well-known "archaisms" change their color. I dream of the day the Basques, the clandestines of Ulster, the Greens of Germany, Scottish and Welsh miners, immigrants, Polish pseudo-Catholics, Southern Italians, and the nameless packs of dogs who refuse to understand or know anything that is offered to them will start screaming together: "Yes, we are all archaic, and you can put your modernity where you want!" So the passivity and demoralization will turn into a will to freedom and freedom into a material force that is able to change the course of a nasty history.

NOTES

This piece is excerpted from Félix Guattari, "Appendix One," in *New Lines of Alliance, New Spaces of Liberty*, by Félix Guattari and Antonio Negri (London: Autonomedia/Minor Compositions, 2010), 116–127. Reprinted by permission of Minor Compositions (<http://www.minorcompositions.info/>). The essay was originally written in 1984.

1. Félix Guattari, *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics* (London: Penguin, 1984). The globalization of capitalism, brought about by the incorporation of Eastern countries and the third world under its system according to particular modalities, is described in *Molecular Revolution* as being correlative to a molecular and constantly growing integration of human faculties and affects by the bias of the media, collective infrastructures, state apparatuses, and so on.

2. This phrase alludes to the issue of demoralization of the armed forces, developed by early-twentieth-century socialists.

3. The protesting Poles' opposition to society and the state-party today is an example. [Editors' note: Guattari refers here to the Solidarity movement in Poland, which employed social movement tactics, civil disobedience, and workers' rights unionism to oppose what they condemned as bureaucratic state capitalism. The Polish government opposed and attempted to destroy the Solidarity movement in the early 1980s.]

1.3 The Theory of State-Capitalism

The Soviet Union as Capitalist Society

RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RULE

It was the contention of Comrade [Leon] Trotsky that the existence of statified property in Russia was sufficient to characterize it as a workers' state, regardless of the political regime in power. The counterrevolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy, therefore, could and did (though badly) defend the social rule of the proletariat. To thus epitomize the constituent elements of a workers' state is at wide variance with the views held by [Karl] Marx and [Vladimir] Lenin. Let us look at the birth of the Soviet Republic for a verification of their views.

In establishing itself as the ruling class, the Russian proletariat not only expropriated the capitalist and landlord but also guaranteed power to the poor: political power (a state controlled by them through their own organs—the trade unions, the Soviets, the Bolshevik Party) and social power, which Lenin defined as the “practical participation in the management” of the state. Lenin emphasized that it was the aim of the Soviet state “to attract every member of the poor class to practical participation in the management.”¹ In the same pamphlet, “Soviets at Work,” he further elaborated this view: “The proximity of the Soviets to the toiling masses creates special forms of recall and other methods of control by the masses.”² He called for the development “with specific diligence” of these special forms of recall and diverse methods of mass control. By means of “practical participation in the management” of the state, the political and social rule of the proletariat are merged, and that guaranteed power in the hands of the proletariat. The diverse forms of

mass control would paralyze “every possibility of distorting the Soviet rule,” remove “the wild grass of bureaucratism.” That was his practical interpretation of his theoretical elaboration of the state in his *State and Revolution*; to wit: (1) Control by the workers cannot be carried out by a state of bureaucrats but must be carried out by a state of armed workers. (2) In a proletarian state all must be “bureaucrats” so that no one could be a bureaucrat. (3) The state should be so constituted that it begins to wither away and cannot but wither away.

In 1918, Lenin stressed the fact that the expropriation of the capitalists was a comparatively simple problem when contrasted to the more complex one of “creating conditions under which the bourgeoisie could neither exist nor come anew into existence.”³ In the further development of the Soviet state, Lenin once again realized the practical meaning of the dictum of Marx that a society could “neither clear by bold leaps, nor remove by legal enactments, the obstacles offered by the successive phases of its normal development.” But he knew that so long as the Soviet state “guaranteed powers to the workers and the poor,” it need not be fatal to it to “implant” state capitalism.

Not even the most pious worker-statist would contend that the workers had any power in the present Soviet state. He would merely reiterate that so long as there was stified property, etc., etc. But I deny that the social conquests of October [1917]—the conscious and active political and practical participation of the masses in liberating themselves from the yoke of tsarism, capitalism, and landlordism—are to be narrowly translated into mere stified property; that is to say, the ownership of the means of production by a state which in no way resembles the Marxian concept of a workers’ state—i.e., “the proletariat organized as the ruling class.”⁴

STATE CAPITALISM OR BUREAUCRATIC STATE SOCIALISM?

Comrade [Max] Shachtman asks: “If the workers are no longer the ruling class and the Soviet Union no longer a workers’ state, and if there is no private-property-owning capitalist class ruling Russia, what is the class nature of the state and what exactly is the bureaucracy that dominates it?”⁵ And he answers: bureaucratic state socialism, because, among other things, the new term elucidates the “distinction from capitalism” characteristic of the class nature of the Soviet state.

But how does the mode of production differ under bureaucratic state socialist rule from that under capitalist rule? What is the economic law of motion of this presumably new exploitative society? These crucial points Comrade Shachtman fails to discuss. Let me examine the alleged “distinc-

tion from capitalism” characteristic of the Soviet Union and see whether it isn’t a distinction from a certain stage of capitalism rather than from capitalism as a whole.

The determining factor in analyzing the class nature of a society is not whether the means of production are the private property of the capitalist class or are state-owned, but whether the means of production are capital, that is, whether they are monopolized and alienated from the direct producers. The Soviet government occupies in relation to the whole economic system the position that a capitalist occupies in relation to a single enterprise. Shachtman’s designation of the class nature of the Soviet Union as “bureaucratic state socialism” is an irrational expression behind which exists the real economic relation of state-capitalist-exploiter to the propertyless exploited.

Shachtman correctly emphasizes that “the conquest of state power by the bureaucracy spelled the destruction of the property relations established by the Bolshevik Revolution.” Yet he does not see that the “new” production relations are none other than the relations under capitalism. He does not even consider the possibility that the “new” exploitative society is state capitalism. Comrade Trotsky did consider that variant interpretation but violently opposes defining the Stalinist bureaucracy as a class of state capitalists. Let us see whether he was justified in his opposition.

State capitalism, Trotsky contended, does not exist in Russia since the ownership of the means of production by the state occurred in history by the proletariat with the method of social revolution and not by the capitalist with the method of state trustification.⁶ But does the manner in which a thing is accomplished determine the use to which it is put by its usurpers any more than each task to be accomplished determines the group to execute it? “The bourgeois character of a revolution,” wrote Trotsky in polemicizing against the Menshevik thesis that since the Russian Revolution was a bourgeois revolution the proletariat ought to renounce power in favor of the bourgeoisie, “could not answer in advance the question as to which class would solve the tasks of the democratic revolution.”⁷ In further expounding his theory of the permanent revolution, Trotsky wrote: “Socialization of the means of production had become a necessary condition for bringing the country out of barbarism. That is the law of combined development for backward countries.” Precisely! But is it necessary among Marxists to stress the fact that socialization of the means of production is not socialism but as much an economic law of capitalist development as is monopoly. The weak Russian bourgeoisie was incapable of accomplishing either the democratic tasks of the revolution or the further development of the productive forces. Its task was accomplished by the masses with the method of social revolution. However, the task of the

young proletarian rulers was greatly complicated by the backwardness of Russia, and the treachery of the Social-Democracy left them unaided by the world proletariat. Finally, the Stalinist counterrevolution identified itself with the state. The manner in which the means of production were converted into state property did not deprive them of their becoming capital.

To prove that the particular state-monopoly capitalism existing in Russia did not come about through state trustification but by methods of social revolution explains its historic origin but does not prove that its economic law of motion differs from that analyzed by Karl Marx, [Friedrich] Engels, and Lenin. It is high time to evaluate “the economic law of motion of modern society” as it applies to the Soviet Union and not merely to retain for statified property the same “superstitious reverence” the opportunists entertained for the bourgeois state.

NO DEFENSE OF THE CAPITALIST SOCIETY EXISTING IN RUSSIA

Because we did not clearly understand the class nature of the present Soviet state, the Soviet Union’s integral participation in the Second Imperialist World War came as a monstrous surprise.⁸ The Red Army march on Poland, the bloody conquest of part of Finland, and the peaceful conquest of the Baltic states proved that the Stalinized Red Army had no more connection with the spirit, purpose, and content of October than has the Stalinist state, whose armed might it is. What an abhorrent relapse from the conquests of October are the Stalinist conquests!

Long before the outbreak of World War II the Russian masses bore the brunt of this “abhorrent relapse.” The worker had a first premonition of it when as a Left Oppositionist he fought the Thermidorians⁹ who deprived him of his job along with his Communist Party membership card. The glimmer of hope that he had when the Stalinist bureaucracy nevertheless adopted the Opposition plank for industrialization and collectivization faded as soon as he realized that the development of the productive forces did not raise his standard of living. He learned quickly enough that the “socialist fatherland” knew how to accumulate for other purposes. He would have felt the grind of Stakhanovism¹⁰ if the name had not been Russified for him but had the original Ford-Taylor speed-up insignia. To call the piecework system, which is best suited to capitalist exploitation, “socialist working norms” does not lighten the degree of exploitation of the bricklayer who has to lay sixteen thousand bricks per day, or for a typist (if I may be permitted a petty-bourgeois interest in my own trade) to type forty-five pages of thirty lines each and sixty strokes in each line per day.¹¹ Decreeing “universal, freehand

equal suffrage” does not make it possible for the fourteen-year-old to vote “no” to being conscripted in the labor reserves, “educated” (read: taught a trade), and at the end of the two-year training program, being put to work on state enterprises to work for four consecutive years—even if this newly educated sixteen-year-old is guaranteed “the established wage rate.” It is not only that the income of the factory worker is 110 rubles a month, and that of the director 1,200 a month, but that the whole mode of production produces and reproduces the capitalist production relations. State capitalism, it is true, but capitalism nevertheless. Could we have forgotten that state property forms (and it is only form, not relation, for it is without control by the masses) are the aim of proletarian revolution only as a means to achieve the quicker the fullest development of the productive forces the better to satisfy the needs of man?

No, the existence of stratified property in Russia does not make its defense imperative even were the Soviet Union attacked by other imperialist nations for purposes of abolishing stratified property (which is less likely just now than the Stalinist state joining the “new order” of Hitler)—unless we are to change our policy and call for the defense of, say, France because the work of the German fascists in dividing the country is of a decidedly retrogressive character.

It is the irrationality of Shachtman’s characterization of the class nature of the Soviet Union as “bureaucratic state socialism” that leads him to expound a conditional defense of the present Soviet state. It is the real economic relations behind that irrational expression that leads to no defense of the capitalist society existing in Russia.

NOTES

This article was first published as Raya Dunayevskaya, “The Theory of State-Capitalism: The Soviet Union as Capitalist Society,” *Internal Discussion Bulletin*, March 1941, available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/dunayevskaya/works/1941/ussr-capitalist.htm>.

1. See V. I. Lenin, “The International Position of the Russian Soviet Republic and the Fundamental Tasks of the Socialist Revolution,” in *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress, 1965), 27:273.

2. *Ibid.*, 274–275.

3. *Ibid.*, 245.

4. This expression is from Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: International, 1994), 30.

5. Max Shachtman, “Is Russia a Workers’ State?” *New Internationalist*, December 1940, pp. 195–205, available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/shachtman/1940/12/russia.htm>. Max Shachtman (1904–1972) was a leader of the Workers’ Party who argued that Stalinist Russia was a form of “bureaucratic collectivism.” See *ibid.*

6. See Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (New York: Doubleday, 1937), 248.

7. Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution* (New York: Pioneer, 1931), xxvii.

8. This refers to the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact of August 1939, which was followed within a month by the joint Russian and German carving up of East Europe.

9. The Left Opposition refers to the political opposition against Joseph Stalin grouped around Trotsky from 1923. Thermidor was the month in the calendar adopted by the French Revolution, in which Maximilien Robespierre was overthrown by a reactionary wing of the revolution. Trotsky often used the term to describe those grouped around Stalin after 1923.

10. Stakhanovism was a system of speedup of production introduced in Russia in 1935, which led to a rise in income differentiation. It encountered much resistance by the workers.

11. The norms would be higher now. The preceding norms were effective up to June 26, 1940, at which time the working day was changed from seven to eight hours. This decree was supplemented by a law interpreting this lengthening of the work day by instructing the various institutions “to raise the norms of production and lower piece prices in proportion to the lengthening of the working day.”

1.4 Death, Freedom, and the Disintegration of Communism

RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

Death and starvation stalked the streets of Hungary as the rebel radio sent out its last SOS. “We are quiet. Not afraid. Send the news to the world.”

The news to the world about five days of freedom revealed more than courageous fighting.

It showed that you cannot kill the idea of freedom. That idea does not float in heaven. People live by that idea.

Overnight the one-party system disintegrated and various political parties reappeared along with small newspapers and radio stations.

Peasants and soldiers united with city workers—spearheaded by the incredible youth who braved Russian tanks.

Hundreds of local and district organizations, from the Hungarian Revolutionary Youth Party to old parties, including both smallholders and social democrats, appeared.

So total was the wrath of the people against Russian Communism that the Hungarian Communist Party tried to appear under a new guise. The temporary puppet leader, János Kádár, reorganized it as the Socialist Workers Party, but no one took that seriously. Indeed it was the same old communism that, while promising withdrawal of the Russian troops and a different way of living, was conspiring to bring back the Russian tanks and troops in force.

THEY WILL NOT DISAPPEAR

The revolutionary forces now unloosed cannot be overcome by sheer force. They may be forced underground but they will not disappear. Nor will their impact be exhausted within the national boundaries of Hungary.

Already, in Western Europe, we see the beginning of the disintegration of the mass communist parties. Ever since the end of World War II, the West European people—veering sharply against the private capitalism that they knew and hated because it had brought them two world wars in one lifetime—had turned to Russian Communism, literally by the millions.

They now see Russian Communism as but another name for state capitalism. They are tearing up their Communist Party membership cards by the thousands. The question is: Where will they go now that they see both poles of world capital—United States and Russia—striving for world domination? I will take up this question in my next column. For now, we must stress that this tearing up of the C.P. membership cards stands on a par with the Hungarian Revolution itself in showing a road to freedom out of the totalitarian stranglehold.

NOTE

This excerpt was previously published in Raya Dunayevskaya, “Death, Freedom and the Disintegration of Communism,” *News and Letters*, November 27, 1956, available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/dunayevskaya/works/1956/death-communism.htm>.

1.5 Revolution and Counterrevolution in Hungary

RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

“Russian soldiers, go home!” has become the central rallying slogan of the Hungarian Revolution, which broke out on Tuesday, October 23. The student youth seem to have been the ones who sparked this revolt. But there is no doubt whatever that the overwhelming majority of the people are not merely “behind” it but are creatively and actively participating in this struggle for freedom.

If Russia puts down this revolt by its superior military might, it will learn that no counterrevolution can, for long, still the new forces of revolution that have unfolded.

NOTE

This excerpt was previously published in Raya Dunayevskaya, “Revolution and Counterrevolution in Hungary,” *News and Letters*, November 13, 1956, available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/dunayevskaya/works/1956/hungary.htm>.

1.6 Dialectics

The Algebra of Revolution

RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

I come from Russia, 1917, and the ghettos of Chicago, where I first saw a black person. The reason that I'm starting that way is that I was illiterate. You're born in a border town. There's a revolution, there's a counterrevolution, there's anti-Semitism. You know nothing but experience a lot, especially if you happen to be born a revolutionary. You don't know that you're a revolutionary, but you're opposed to everything.

If the capitalists were only exploiting us, they wouldn't last a minute. It's because they have all the mass media, as well as the exploitation, all the education, everything with which to brainwash us and make us think that their ideas are our ideas—"If I only think about myself and my family, I will get somewhere" is that type of idea—that they are able to perpetuate this exploitative system.

If you live when an idea is born and a great revolution in the world is born, it doesn't make any difference where you are. THAT BECOMES THE NEXT STAGE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITY. You know it in your bones in something as simple as when you say, "No!" to your mama, who wants to put you in pink and the boy child in blue.

Take Rosa Parks. Do you think she thought she was starting a revolution? No, she was tired as all get-out! She had just worked a full day. She was tired and just wasn't going to get up again to move to the back of the bus to give her seat to a white man who hadn't labored as hard as she. And the black youths who were sitting there seeing this middle-aged woman being dragged off to the police station said, let's not let Rosa Parks be all alone there.

What did Rosa Parks do by that one action? She started the entire black revolution in the South! She's the one who made Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. the "leader." King would never have been leader if a movement for freedom hadn't started from below, spontaneously.

What is important is that you are so natural an opponent of this system that you will bring on the revolution. Your one action of opposition to the system makes you part of that revolutionary movement, and you did it, not because you were "unconscious"—that's what they think you were—but because you were born a revolutionary and don't like the damn system under which we live!

Take the question of male chauvinism. Suddenly just a "personal," "family" affair makes you rebel. It isn't that you made a category called "a movement from practice to theory; a movement from theory to practice." It isn't in

any book you read. The book may have made a generalization about it, but it was in life, in your life, and because it was also in other lives, and they too rebelled, it became a movement, and a book, and an organization.

One other incident hasn't do with women but with blacks. I was in Paris in 1947, trying to convince Trotskyists they should believe that Russia isn't merely a "degenerated workers' state," it's a state-capitalist society. When I go to Lyon, France, where I addressed the socialist youth, somebody is sitting in that audience whom I didn't know. But now I read all the histories and biographies of Frantz Fanon, and not only was he there, in Lyon at the same time, interested in Trotskyism, but though he was also finding an affinity with existentialism, the black nature leads him away from it all to an independent path he will later call "new humanism." These happenings aren't accidents. When there are great stirrings in life, in revolutions-to-be, something gets in the air and crosses national boundaries.

The point is: it doesn't make any difference whether there was an in-person relationship. If you know the exact relationship between OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE, between PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION, and don't consider any of that as abstract, you then realize it is abstract only if you haven't made the connection of objective and subjective and seen how the actual subjective genuine human new beginnings, which then unite with the movement from theory, can make up into this Absolute Idea AS NEW BEGINNING.

A theory is good for the answer of what you're going to do this year or next year, but you need an entire philosophy for a vision of your age's "breaking the barrier"—that is to say, not only overthrowing the old but creating the new.

NOTE

This piece excerpts comments made by Raya Dunayevskaya during the 1978 Convention of News and Letters Committees, in response to a question from the floor about the meaning of dialectical philosophy. The text is available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/dunayevskaya/works/1978/algebra-revolution.htm>.

2 | Ideology

If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.

—Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*

People with advantages are loath to believe that they just happen to be people with advantages. They come readily to define themselves as inherently worthy of what they possess; they come to believe themselves “naturally” elite; and, in fact, to imagine their possessions and their privileges as natural extensions of their own elite selves. In this sense, the idea of the elite as composed of men and women having a finer moral character is an ideology of the elite as a privileged ruling stratum, and this is true whether the ideology is elite-made or made up for it by others.

—C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*

2.1 Socialism or Barbarism

CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS

In most countries the working class is organized in gigantic trade unions and political parties, numbering tens of millions of members. But these unions and parties are every day more openly and more cynically playing the role of direct agents of the ruling class and of the capitalist state, or of the bureaucratic capitalism that reigns in Russia.

Only a few minute organizations seem to have survived the general shipwreck, organizations such as the “Fourth International,” the Anarchist Federations, and a few self-described “ultraleftist” groups (Bordigists, Spartacists, Council Communists). These organizations are very weak, not only because of their numbers (numerical strength by itself is never a criterion), but above all because of their political and ideological bankruptcy. Relics of the past rather than harbingers of the future, they have proved themselves utterly incapable of understanding the fundamental social transformations of the twentieth century and even less capable of developing a positive orientation toward them.

In some countries, the Anarchist Federations still enjoy the support of a number of workers with a healthy class instinct—but those workers are very backward politically, and the anarchists keep them that way. The anarchists' constant refusal to venture beyond the sterile slogan "No Politics," or to take theory seriously, contributes to the confusion. This makes anarchism one more blind alley for workers to get lost in.

Meanwhile, various "ultraleftist" groups cultivate their pet sectarian deviations, some of them (like the Bordigists) even going so far as to blame the proletariat for their own stagnation and impotence, others (like the Council Communists) living happily in the past and seeking therein their recipes for the "socialist" kitchens of the future.

Within the framework of a world system based on exploitation, new economic forms and new types of exploitation have appeared. While maintaining the most fundamental features of capitalism these new forms differ significantly from traditional capitalism in that they have superseded and broken radically with such traditional capitalist forms as the private ownership of the means of production. These new economic forms even superficially resemble some of the objectives the workers' movement had set itself, objectives such as the statification or nationalization of the means of production and exchange, economic planning and the coordination of production on an international scale.

The bureaucracy was the social expression of these new economic forms. As traditional forms of property and the bourgeoisie of the classical period are pushed aside by state property and by the bureaucracy, the main conflict within society gradually ceases to be the old one between the owners of wealth and those without property and is replaced by the conflict between directors and executants in the process of production. In fact, the bureaucracy justifies its own existence (and can be explained in objective terms) only insofar as it plays a role deemed essential to the "management" of the productive activities of society and, thereby, of all other forms of activity.

This has taken place without there resulting for the toiling masses anything other than a more intense, better coordinated, and, in a word, rationalized exploitation. The objective outcome of this evolution has been a more efficient and more systematic organization for exploiting and enslaving the proletariat.

The beneficiary of this exploitation of the proletariat is an enormous and monstrous bureaucracy (consisting of the bureaucrats in the political and economic apparatus, of technicians and intellectuals, of leaders of the "Communist" party and of the trade unions, and of the top military and police personnel). Economic "planning" proceeds in the interests of the bureaucracy and affects all areas of production.

Thus there evolved a system that cynically calls itself “socialist” yet where side by side with the appalling poverty of the working masses can be seen the life of luxury led by about 10 or 15 percent of the population who make up the exploiting bureaucracy. This is a system where millions of people are held in concentration and forced labor camps, where the state police (of which the Gestapo was but an imitation) exercises total terror, where “elections” and other “democratic” procedures would be deemed sinister farces were they not the tragic expressions of the terrorization, the brutalization, and the degradation of man under the most overwhelming dictatorship alive today.

How did things reach this pass? How did the power established by the first victorious proletarian revolution transform itself into the most effective instrument for exploiting and oppressing the masses? And how did the parties of the Third International, created to abolish exploitation and to inaugurate on earth the power of workers and peasants, become the instruments of a new social formation with interests as radically opposed to those of the proletariat as had been those of the traditional bourgeoisie itself? These are the questions that all advanced workers will anxiously ask themselves, once they have understood that to see anything “socialist” in Russia is to calumniate the very word *socialism*.

The October Revolution succumbed to the bureaucratic counterrevolution under the combined pressures of external and internal forces, of objective and subjective factors. They all boil down to the following idea: Between the second and third decade of this century neither the world economy nor the working class was as yet quite ripe for the total abolition of exploitation. A revolution, even a victorious one, would be overthrown if it remained isolated in a single country. It would either be overthrown from outside, through civil war and the armed intervention of other capitalist countries, or it would degenerate from within, through a change in the nature of the regime to which it had given birth.

A fundamental question therefore has to be answered on the morrow of every successful revolution. Who will be the master of society once it is purged of the capitalists and their tools? The structure of the new regime, its political form, the relationship between the working class and its own leadership, the management of production, the type of system prevailing in the factories—all these are but particular aspects of this general problem.

Should a Third World War lead to the unification of the world system of exploitation, the civilization and social life of humanity would be threatened with total collapse. The unlimited totalitarian domination of a single group of exploiters (whether Yankee monopolists or Russian bureaucrats) would give them free rein to plunder the earth. The fall in the productivity of labor under such a regime of ever-increasing exploitation and the complete transformation

of its dominant stratum into a parasitic caste no longer having any need to develop the forces of production would lead to a massive regression in social conditions and to a prolonged setback in the development of human consciousness.

NOTE

This piece is excerpted from Cornelius Castoriadis, *Political and Social Writings*, vol. 1, 1946–1955, trans. and ed. David Ames Curtis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). Copyright 1988 by the University of Minnesota. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

2.2 Ideology Materialized

GUY DEBORD

Self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself only insofar as it exists in and for another self-consciousness; that is, it exists only by being recognized.

—G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*

212

Ideology is the intellectual *basis* of class societies within the conflictual course of history. Ideological expressions have never been pure fictions; they represent a distorted consciousness of realities, and as such they have been real factors that have in turn produced real distorting effects. This interconnection is intensified with the advent of the spectacle—the *materialization* of ideology brought about by the concrete success of an autonomized system of economic production—which virtually identifies social reality with an ideology that has remolded all reality in its own image.

213

Once ideology—the *abstract* will to universality and the illusion associated with that will—is legitimized by the universal abstraction and the effective dictatorship of illusion that prevail in modern society, it is no longer a voluntaristic struggle of the fragmentary but its triumph. At that point, ideological pretensions take on a sort of flat, positivistic precision: they no longer represent historical choices; they are assertions of undeniable facts. In such a context, the particular *names* of ideologies tend to disappear. The specifically ideological forms of system-supporting labor are reduced to an “epistemological base” that is itself presumed to be beyond ideology. Materialized ideology has no name, just as it has no formulatable historical agenda. Which is another way of saying that the history of *different ideologies* is over.

214

Ideology, whose whole internal logic led toward what [Karl] Mannheim calls “total ideology”¹—the despotism of a fragment imposing itself as pseudo-knowledge of a frozen *totality*, as a *totalitarian* worldview—has reached its culmination in the immobilized spectacle of nonhistory. Its culmination is also its dissolution into society as a whole. When that society itself is *concretely dissolved*, ideology—the *final irrationality* standing in the way of historical life—must also disappear.

215

The spectacle is the epitome of ideology because in its plenitude it exposes and manifests the essence of all ideological systems: the impoverishment, enslavement, and negation of real life. The spectacle is the material “expression of the separation and estrangement between man and man.” The “new power of deception” concentrated in it is based on the production system in which “as the quantity of objects increases, so does the realm of alien powers to which man is subjected.” This is the supreme stage of an expansion that has turned need against life. “The need for money is thus the true need produced by the modern economic system, and it is the only need which the latter produces.”² Hegel’s characterization of money as “the life of what is dead, moving within itself”³ has now been extended by the spectacle to all social life.

216

In contrast to the project outlined in the “Theses on Feuerbach” (the realization of philosophy in a praxis transcending the opposition between idealism and materialism), the spectacle preserves the ideological features of both materialism and idealism, imposing them in the pseudo-concreteness of its universe. The contemplative aspect of the old materialism, which conceives the world as representation and not as activity—and which ultimately idealizes matter—is fulfilled in the spectacle, where concrete things are automatic masters of social life. Conversely, the *dreamed activity* of idealism is also fulfilled in the spectacle, through the technical mediation of signs and signals—which ultimately materialize an abstract ideal.

217

The parallel between ideology and schizophrenia demonstrated in [Joseph] Gabel’s *False Consciousness* should be considered in the context of this eco-

conomic materialization of ideology. Society has become what ideology already was. The fracturing of practice and the antidialectical false consciousness that results from that fracturing are imposed at every moment of everyday life subjected to the spectacle—a subjection that systematically destroys the “faculty of encounter” and replaces it with a *social hallucination*: a false consciousness of encounter, an “illusion of encounter.” In a society where no one can any longer be *recognized* by others, each individual becomes incapable of recognizing his own reality. Ideology is at home; separation has built its own world.

218

“In clinical accounts of schizophrenia,” says Gabel, “the deterioration of the dialectic of totality (with dissociation as its extreme form) and the deterioration of the dialectic of becoming (with catatonia as its extreme form) seem closely interrelated.”⁴ Imprisoned in a flattened universe bounded by the *screen* of the spectacle, behind which his own life has been exiled, the spectator’s consciousness no longer knows anyone but the *fictitious interlocutors* who subject him to a one-way monologue about their commodities and the politics of their commodities. The spectacle as a whole is his “mirror sign,” presenting illusory escapes from a universal autism.

219

The spectacle, which obliterates the boundaries between self and world by crushing the self besieged by the presence/absence of the world, also obliterates the boundaries between true and false by repressing all directly lived truth beneath the *real presence* of falsehood maintained by the organization of appearances. Individuals who passively accept their subjection to an alien everyday reality are thus driven toward a madness that reacts to that fate by resorting to illusory magical techniques. The essence of this pseudo-response to an unanswerable communication is the acceptance and consumption of commodities. The consumer’s compulsion to imitate is a truly infantile need, conditioned by all the aspects of his fundamental dispossession. As Gabel puts it in describing a quite different level of pathology, “The abnormal need for representation here makes up for a torturing feeling of being on the edge of existence.”⁵

220

In contrast to the logic of false consciousness, which cannot truly know itself, the search for critical truth about the spectacle must also be a true critique.

It must struggle in practice among the irreconcilable enemies of the spectacle and admit that it is nothing without them. By rushing into sordid reformist compromises or pseudo-revolutionary collective actions, those driven by an abstract desire for immediate effectiveness are in reality obeying the ruling laws of thought, adopting a perspective that can see nothing but the *latest news*. In this way delirium reappears within the camp that claims to be opposing it. A critique seeking to go beyond the spectacle must *know how to wait*.

221

The self-emancipation of our time is an emancipation from the material bases of inverted truth. This “historic mission of establishing truth in the world” can be carried out neither by the isolated individual nor by atomized and manipulated masses but only and always by the class that is able to dissolve all classes by reducing all power to the de-alienating form of realized democracy—to councils in which practical theory verifies itself and surveys its own actions. Only there are individuals “directly linked to world history”—there where dialogue has armed itself to impose its own conditions.

NOTE

This piece was previously published as Guy Debord, “Ideology Materialized,” in *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Ken Knabb, available at <http://bopsecrets.org/SI/debord/9.htm>.

1. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1936), 57.
2. Karl Marx, “Human Requirements and Division of Labour under the Rule of Private Property,” in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Progress, 1959), available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/needs.htm>.
3. G.W.F. Hegel, *Jenaer Realphilosophie*, vol. 1, *Die Vorlesungen von 1803/4*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Leipzig, Germany: Felix Meiner, 1932), 239–240.
4. Joseph Gabel, *La fausse conscience: Essai sur la réification* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1962).
5. Ibid.

2.3 American “Common Sense”

FREDY PERLMAN

AMERICAN “COMMON SENSE”

- It’s impossible for people to run their own lives; that’s why they don’t have the power to do so. People are powerless because they have neither the ability nor the desire to control and decide about the social and material conditions in which they live.

- People only want power and privileges over each other. It would be impossible, for example, for university students to fight against the institution that assures them a privileged position. Those students who study do so to get high grades, because with the high grades they can get high-paying jobs, which means the ability to manage and manipulate other people and the ability to buy more consumer goods than other people. If learning were not rewarded with high grades, high pay, power over others, and lots of goods, no one would learn; there'd be no motivation for learning.
- It would be just as impossible for workers to want to run their factories, to want to decide about their production. All that workers are interested in is wages: they just want more wages than others have, so as to buy bigger houses, more cars, and longer trips.
- Even if students, workers, farmers wanted something different, they're obviously satisfied with what they're doing; otherwise they wouldn't be doing it.
- In any case, those who aren't satisfied can freely express their dissatisfaction by buying and by voting: they don't have to buy the things they don't like, and they don't have to vote for the candidates they don't like. It's impossible for them to change their situation any other way.
- Even if some people tried to change the situation some other way, it would be impossible for them to get together; they'd only fight each other, because white workers are racists, black nationalists are antiwhite, feminists are against all men, and students have their own specific problems.
- Even if they did unite, it would obviously be impossible for them to destroy the state and the police and military potential of a powerful industrial society like the United States.

“SCIENTIFIC BASIS” OF THE “COMMON SENSE”

A “social scientist” is someone who is paid to defend this society's myths. His defense mechanism, in its simplest formulation, runs approximately as follows: he begins by assuming that the society of his time and place is the only possible form of society; he then concludes that some other form of society is impossible. Unfortunately, the “social scientist” rarely admits his assumptions; he usually claims that he doesn't make any assumptions. And it can't be said that he's lying outright: he usually takes his assumptions so much for granted that he doesn't even know he's making them.

The “social scientist” claims to be empirical and objective; he claims to make no value judgments. Yet by reducing the person to the bundle of tastes, desires, and preferences to which he’s restricted in capitalist society, the “objective scientist” makes the bizarre claim that this bundle is what the worker is; and he makes the fantastic value judgment that the worker cannot be other than what he is in capitalist society. According to the “laws of human behavior” of this “science,” the solidarity of students with workers, the occupation of factories by workers, the desire of workers to run their own production, distribution, and coordination, are all impossible. Why? Because these things are impossible in capitalist society, and for these “scientists” who make no value judgments, existing societies are the only possible societies, and the corporate-military society is the best of all possible societies.

To the American social scientist, “human nature” is what people do in corporate-military America: a few make decisions, and the rest follow orders; some think, and others do; some buy other people’s labor, and the rest sell their own labor; a few invest, and the rest are consumers; some are sadists, and others masochists; some have a desire to kill and others to die. The “scientist” passes all this off as “exchange,” as “reciprocity,” as a “division of labor” in which people are divided along with tasks. To the “social scientist” this is all so natural that he thinks he makes no value judgments when he takes it all for granted. Corporations and the military even give him grants to show that it’s always been this way: grants to demonstrate that this “human nature” is lodged in the beginning of history and in the depths of the unconscious. (American psychologists—especially “behaviorists”—make the ambiguous “contribution” of demonstrating that animals also have a “human nature”: the psychologists drive rats mad in a situation similar to a war, which the psychologists themselves helped plan, and then they show that rats, too, have a desire to kill, that they have masochist tendencies.)

In terms of what the American “social scientist” takes for granted, when students and workers in France started to fight to do away with “reciprocity,” “exchange,” and the division of labor, they were fighting not against the capitalist police but against “human nature.” And since this is obviously impossible, the events that took place in May 1968 did not take place.

“COMMON SENSE” EXPLODES

The question of *what is possible* cannot be answered in terms of *what is*.

To keep its relative privileges, each group tries to keep the groups below from shaking the structure.

Thus in times of “peace” the system is largely self-policed: the colonized repress the colonized, blacks repress blacks, whites repress each other, the

blacks, and the colonized. Thus the working population represses itself, “law and order” is maintained, and the ruling class is saved from further outlays on the repressive apparatus.

To the “social scientist” and the professional propagandist, this “division of labor” is as *natural* as “human nature” itself. Unity among the different “interest groups” is as inconceivable to the “social scientist” as revolution.

While holding as “scientifically proved” that the different groups cannot unite in an anticapitalist struggle, the expert does all he can to prevent such unity, and his colleagues design weapons just in case people did unite against the capitalist system.

Because sometimes the whole structure cracks.

The same expert who defines the capitalist system as consistent with “human nature,” with people’s tastes, wishes, desires, constructs the arsenal of myths and weapons with which the system defends itself. But what does the system defend itself against: human nature? If it has to fight against human nature to survive, then by the expert’s own language, the system is extremely unnatural.

Thus while some experts define the rebellion in France as impossible because unnatural, their expert colleagues design the incapacitating gases with which cops can suppress such impossible rebellions. BECAUSE ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.

NOTE

This essay is excerpted from Fredy Perlman, *Anything Can Happen* (1968; repr., London: Phoenix, 1992).

2.4 Radical Learning through Neoliberal Crisis

SAYRES RUDY

Education is liberation, removal of all weeds, rubble, and vermin that seek to harm the plant’s delicate shoots, a radiance of light and warmth, the loving rush of rain falling at night.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer as Educator”

SUMMARY

Liberalism reconciles capitalism and democracy in the humanist cultivation of moral and self-improving individuals. Markets and elections require identical capacities: discerning intellect, empathic recognition, agonistic contention, ethical invigilation, and desire to contribute individual to collective

progress. Liberal discourse integrates diverse opinions by nurturing private skills and public duties, personal dreams and civic affinities. Liberal education supports this ideological repression of capitalist-democratic tensions; its neurotic pedagogical subjects instantiate the rickety bad-faith fantasy of the liberal-democratic peace.

Neoliberalism radicalizes capitalism by shedding this integument of humanist pastoralism with its political critique of liberal consolation. Neoliberalism disburdens liberalism of its obsolete palliatives, replacing its docile, disciplined, civic-minded citizens with entrepreneurial self-investors eager to sacrifice everything for market society. Capitalism is wrested from antiquated humanitarian fetters of welfare economics and infantilizing therapies. Neoliberal education enforces this ideological repression of communal mediation; its psychotic subjects instantiate the bad-faith fantasy of turning social aggression into capitalist holism.

Neoliberalism's opponents fight antihumanist hypercapitalism with anti-capitalist hyperhumanism. I urge instead a dialectical inversion of neoliberal discourse that refuses the false comforts of bourgeois democracy. Taking U.S. higher education as a neoliberal exemplar, I envisage an audacious pedagogy that reclaims the generalized physical courage, personal sacrifice, unconscious desires, and "motivating" terror of precarious life to transcend the repressive fantasies of both liberalism and neoliberalism.

LIBERALISM

It is often said that European philosophy is founded on the death sentence of a teacher, Socrates, convicted of corrupting youth and ignoring gods. A harsh sentence for a teacher who "never promised to teach . . . anything," a knower who knew only that "I do not think I know what I do not know."¹ "Corrupting youth" meant insulating their innocence from artifice and conceit—indeed from corruption.

Liberalism draws on blank slates, guided by a similar "romantic notion of original innocence [and] childhood as a period of wisdom, purity, and creativity, a stage . . . children should be left to enjoy rather than be disciplined out of."² Humanist pedagogy rejected the "rote memorization, relentless drills, endless repetition, daily analysis of texts, elaborate exercises in imitation and rhetorical variation, all backed up by the threat of violence," which were characteristic in Shakespeare's day.³ Children and students would embody the liberal order that educated them: hopeful, curious, playful, restless, excited, and brimming with self-discovery.

But anxiety lurks in the "innocence [and] childhood [of our] democratic ideal."⁴ Innocence forges liberal morality, and its fetishized violation justifies

it. We seek out harrowing stories of abused children to affirm our primal innocence.⁵ “*Stolen youth*” consecrates this purity: a boy’s “happy, carefree years of childhood . . . drawn to a close” by war;⁶ a girl left “no longer a child” by occupation;⁷ a kid aged to death by poverty.⁸ But it also sublimates our anxiety that we are *not* innocent. Liberal humanists blame the outside world for our fallen selves but also our inner selves for our fallen world. These ambivalent selves converge in the conflicted pedagogy of liberal “freedom” that tames children and capitalists alike.

In *The Bell Jar* Sylvia Plath sneers, “I was taking one of those honors programs that teach you to think independently.”⁹ One thinks for others and only then for oneself.¹⁰ Liberalism first must tame the “wild child” released by self-exploration. “These ‘vagabonds of the intellect’” loosed by humanism’s “vast operation of de-consecration” must be contained.¹¹ Novels about college¹² assured us that narcissism would replace the “inner-direction implanted early in life by the elders.”¹³ But education theorists like Ernest Becker lamented the “tragic paradox [of] education and the state”: “liberal education . . . train[ed] youth to exercise their own judgement, seek their own solutions, criticize and master the world on their own term. [But then recoiled] that they [might] criticize . . . anything.”¹⁴ Liberal pedagogy inevitably echoed Immanuel Kant’s injunction to “argue as much as you like and about whatever you like, but obey!” “Intellectual freedom” requires limits on “civil freedom,”¹⁵ the theory went, just as democracy should limit capitalism.

Education served the utilitarian needs of the “civilizing process”¹⁶ but especially of capitalism. Democratic pedagogy was “to provide the modern state with enlightened citizens and to train an efficient work force.”¹⁷ Liberal schooling also ensured wealthy classes a “rate of return on educational capital.”¹⁸ But capitalist-democratic cultivation of individuality and wage labor were unstable.¹⁹ This tension recalls Karl Marx’s chiasmus: “In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality.”²⁰ Exposing this ideological perversion, Theodor Adorno would stress that the “precarious and irrational self-preservation of society is falsified and turned into an achievement of its immanent justice or ‘rationality.’”²¹ Humanist capitalism exemplifies this process.

Liberal pedagogy supports the democratic claim to promote civil society to “restrict the private abuse of public institutions” and “prevent aristocratic tendencies.”²² Children must become little liberals prepared for enlightened civic “participation.”²³ Humanism advances the “consciously socialized interest,” in John Dewey’s phrase, against “customs operating under the control of a superior class.”²⁴ Even playgrounds were “arenas for democratic advancement [of] children rich and poor, immigrant and native-born.”²⁵ The liberal student is, in short, a welter of capitalist-democratic subjectivities. She works

hard; reads and votes critically; becomes a CEO or protests one; joins or resists a war—all within the humanist-pedagogic *ethos*. She knows that rights entail duties, privilege requires civics, and social reciprocity reconciles entrepreneur and elector in a stable capitalist polity in which “the free assent of the members is the only source of political authority.”²⁶ Liberalism:

- nurtures authentic selfhood
- develops personal character
- assimilates individual desires
- integrates idiosyncratic creativity
- cultivates particular talents
- aligns unique pursuits with general ethics
- inculcates “agency” discourse
- disciplines excess energies
- sublimates disruptive desires/affects
- moralizes communal sentiment
- instrumentalizes refined talents
- establishes logocentric valuation
- internalizes implicit social codes
- consolidates ideological conformity
- diffuses public obligation
- fantasizes self/society reconciliation

NEOLIBERALISM

Neoliberalism decimates humanist solace in a capitalism *without consolation, apology, or guilt*, populated by self-investors without nagging superegos or nodding therapists. Neoliberalism is terrorism, instilling fear of abjection under market austerity. Neoliberalism is to liberalism as Leninism is to Marxism, reviving a gradualist theory by attacking its fetters. Immanent in the liberalism it condemns, neoliberalism commodifies education to promote paranoid aggression.²⁷ Through its academic outposts, neoliberalism imposes an “inverted totalitarian” kingdom of means.²⁸

Neoliberalism has been a pedagogical calamity. First, increasing poverty, inequity, and financial burdens devastate students, teachers, and campuses. Meretricious spending on vanity projects and fiscal austerity combine to defund public schools, triggering social migration; prioritize athletic over academic programs; encourage elite colleges to exclude poorer applicants; increase dropout rates through debt peonage; and incur living-wage campaigns by staff. Corporate higher education attacks faculty as well by intensifying battles over intellectual property, productivity assessments, cutthroat

careerism, precarious employment, and poverty-wage adjunct assignments. Second, neoliberal financial strangulation subsists on a steady discursive diet of meritocracy, lean production, business modeling, test-prep preoccupation, and “learning outcome” yardsticks.²⁹ In effect bourgeois pedagogy celebrates STEM-centric science envy, denigrates literature and the humanities, hinders open inquiry and innovative research, harms teaching and undermines learning, and erodes academic freedom.³⁰

Many misconstrue neoliberal harshness as capitalism on steroids: a degree change in bourgeois economics. Neoliberalism advances not by reinventing capitalism but by removing its social emollients. Seeing neoliberalism as extreme capitalism romanticizes its earlier incarnations and eclipses resistance to them. Neoliberalism assails dissent from maximal capitalist exploitation. As Samir Amin says, “The weakening of the working class and historic left stance . . . encourages capital to take a so-called neoliberal hard line.”³¹ The supposed indices of neoliberalism have been here all along: disposable people, reserve workers, class conflict, systemic precariousness, personal responsibility, and capital-subservient pedagogy.³² Liberalism refers *not to* the lack of bourgeois rigors but of their public amelioration.³³ Its neoliberal successor purifies capitalism by destroying humane restraint along with its fantasy of harmonious capitalist life.³⁴

“The resurgence of liberalism in the form of neoliberalism”³⁵ is a *normative* correction; it rewires the democratic asylum, not the capitalist lunatic. First, “neoliberalism [constitutes] a rationality” of “effective abandonment.”³⁶ We live or die by our own exertion. Second, neoliberalism fully subsumes rather than just commodifies. Things and people aren’t *potentially* but *necessarily* reduced to exchange values and punished for nonmarket pursuits. Third, capitalist markets are organic systems requiring the sacrifice of personal security and communal reciprocity.³⁷ Neoliberalism replaces repressive ideology with sacrificial theology, recalling Søren Kierkegaard’s denial of a “guarantee that our sacrifice will be rewarded, that it will restore Meaning to our life—we have to make a leap of faith which, to an external observer cannot but look like an act of madness.”³⁸ Wendell Berry calls it “sentimental capitalism,” in which “everything small, local, private, personal, natural, good, and beautiful must be sacrificed in the interest of the ‘free market’ and the great corporations, which will bring . . . security and happiness . . . in, of course, the future.”³⁹

For neoliberals capitalism is the condition of freedom, supreme over individuals. Thus Ludwig von Mises could call “the capitalist system of production . . . an economic democracy in which every penny gives a right to vote.”⁴⁰ Neoliberal governance secures property rights, enforces law, and directs markets.⁴¹ To Friedrich von Hayek, “[liberalism’s] defect was not that it adhered

too stubbornly to principles, but rather that it lacked principles sufficiently definite to provide clear guidance.”⁴² Markets need muscles—the state must compel capitalism, not just clear a space for it. Neoliberalism modifies laissez-faire economics much as state-led growth revised “free trade.”⁴³ In its “move toward more state by less government,” in Michel Foucault’s phrase, neoliberals consolidate a “neoclassical synthesis [that uses] macroeconomic policy [to] stabilize aggregate demand, utilizing tools of fiscal and monetary policy.”⁴⁴ Neoliberalism replaces:

- authenticity with flexibility
- personal with corporate character
- assimilated with deregulated desires
- idiosyncrasy with brand name
- particular with substitutable talents
- ethical with contractual obligation
- agency with autonomy
- disciplined with released excess energies
- sublimated with expulsive fantasies
- neurotic with psychotic subjectivity
- communitarian sentiment with enclave mentality
- mediated with immediate gratification
- logocentric valuation with identitarian/psychic injury⁴⁵
- implicit social codes with explicit social symbolism
- ideological conformity with postideological candor
- public safety with private security
- reconciliation of self/society with antinomy

POSTNEOLIBERAL PERSON(A)S

But tho’ education be disclaim’d by philosophy, as a fallacious ground of assent to any opinion, it prevails nevertheless in the world, and in this cause why all systems are apt to be rejected at first as new and unusual.

—David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*

Rejections of neoliberalism tend toward nostalgia. If neoliberalism is “faltering” under “structural strains . . . it [can] no longer . . . handle,”⁴⁶ perhaps we should relitigate social democracy. Maybe neoliberal commodification should inspire resistance by “cosmopolitan education” or “slow scholarship.”⁴⁷ Because humanism limited capitalist excess, it seems natural to think a “hyperhumanism” can constrain neoliberal “hypercapitalism.” But this just the old liberal fantasy recycled. Instead, let’s go *through* neoliberalism, explode

its cracks, and reweaponize its tools. As Richard Gilman-Opalsky proclaims, crisis desires a “revolt [that] embodies and reflects the transformative aspirations of everyday people.”⁴⁸ On and off campus we must repoliticize pedagogy, revising our scholarship⁴⁹ while turning “traditional disciplinary boundaries” into “sites/cites of contestation [in] forging . . . alternatives as academics, grassroots organizers, and activists.”⁵⁰

Recall that neoliberal bad faith exposes liberal bad faith with unusual candor about capitalism:

1. *Capitalism cannot be palliated by humanism.*
2. *Capitalism cannot be softened by ideology.*
3. *Capitalism is an unmediated physical test.*
4. Capitalist innovation violates tradition.
5. Capitalist sacrifices for self equal sacrifices for capital.
6. The capitalist invests in a substitutable self.
7. Capitalist risk is universal.
8. Capitalist precariousness prompts fierce resistance.

These neoliberal commitments provide the consciousness to reject liberal democracy *and* the subjectivity to reject neoliberalism. We can dialectically invert and sublimate neoliberal candor. Capitalism is inescapably brutal, says the neoliberal (1–3), so approach it radically and absolutely; yes, we reject it *absolutely* and *radically*. Capitalism rewards startling inventions by sacrificial members of a universal community who fiercely resist precariousness, says the neoliberal (4–8); yes, therein lies the communist revolt! May the perverse play of the psychological-physical person(a) inspire the uncaptured pedagogy of the uprising.

In Otto de Kar’s novella *The Figure in the Distance*, the narrator recalls his high school performance in *Antigone*: “Life would never again have the same vastness as it had on those bare boards. . . . From that moment on, everything seemed less important. . . . He had participated in a drama of love and fate and death.”⁵¹ The child transforms himself through an act, a role, a part. An epigraph to Tobias Wolff’s *This Boy’s Life* is a similar comment by Oscar Wilde: “The first duty in life is to assume a pose. What the second is, no one has yet discovered.” The boy Wolff, playing with his gun, wonders what an approaching nun “would . . . make of me. . . . I didn’t understand it myself. Being so close to so much robust identity made me feel the poverty of my own, the ludicrous aspect of my costume and props.”⁵² Imagining himself a sniper, the happy child is suddenly shattered, sees himself through another as a boy. Similarly, contemplating the ducks in *Catcher in the Rye*, ageless nature beyond him, Holden Caulfield undergoes “a conscious and voluntary

surrender that is prelude to Enlightenment.⁵³ How does the ecstasy of role play bring us the joy of our higher true self?

“*Persona* originally means ‘mask’ and it is through the mask that the individual acquires a role and a social identity,” Giorgio Agamben says, describing a patrician’s insignia. *Persona* becomes “the ‘personality’ that defines the place of the individual in the dramas and rituals of social life. Eventually *persona* came to signify the juridical capacity and political dignity of the free man.”⁵⁴ “The struggle for recognition is,” he stresses, “a struggle for a mask but this mask coincides with the ‘personality’ that society recognizes in every individual.” Hence “the moral person constitutes himself . . . through, at once, an adhesion to and a distancing from, the social mask.”⁵⁵ We have here a reversal of our liberal-therapeutic holistic self. The mask as person(a) allows us to play not on our surface but beneath it, secure, unseen. Think of the director Jacques Copeau’s frustration with an actor who “could experience but not express an emotion,” the demand that he “struggle with his own blood.”⁵⁶ Having perfected the person(a) of his character he must imbue it with his *own* person: he traverses the irreducibly liminal space of the self/person(a). This person(a) turns the interchangeable neoliberal subject, ever malleable to market direction, into a masked fugitive, revealed by will and choice alone. Teachers and students should cultivate this person(a) as both intensification and protection of creative upheaval beyond liberal conformity and neoliberal promiscuity.

Rainer Maria Rilke’s letters (1903–1904) to Franz Kappus, a soldier seeking advice on his poetry, offer cryptic counsel. Rilke begins his mentorship by denying its possibility: “You ask whether your verses are any good. You ask me. You have asked others before this. . . . I beg you to stop doing that sort of thing.” His gentle pedagogy is strictly staged. First, achieve “vast, inner solitude”: “walk inside yourself and meet no one for hours,” gazing “upon it all as a child would.”⁵⁷ Only in radical solitude do we find our person. Second, engage “your innermost feeling, in your quietest hour” so “the natural growth of your inner life will eventually guide you.”⁵⁸ Third, perceive the relationship to creativity; “ask yourself in the most silent hour of your night: *must* I write?”⁵⁹ This stage also occasions your “search into the depths of Things,” to “find out if this way of perceiving the world arises from a necessity of your being.”⁶⁰ Fourth, Rilke says one must accept that “in important matters we are unspeakably alone”—the condition of natality.⁶¹

Most striking is his insistence that poetic words seek what eludes words. “Most experiences are unsayable,” he readily announces. You must “let each impression and each embryo of a feeling come to completion, entirely in itself, in the dark, in the unsayable, the unconscious.” What language desires, he ruminates, “is so very delicate, is almost unsayable.” When Gilles Deleuze oddly refers to “Rilke refusing to give any advice to a young poet,”⁶² he may

mean his initial warning was sincere: poetic guidance itself may be unsayable. But Rilke submits to the wordless unconscious, the process of becoming his inner experience. At this moment, one is not liberal subject of a self but posthumanist object of a life. In Deleuze's words:

It's a strange business, speaking for yourself, in your own name, because it doesn't at all come with seeing yourself as an ego or a person or a subject. Individuals find a real name for themselves, rather, only through the harshest exercise in depersonalization, by opening themselves up to the multiplicities everywhere within them, to the intensities running through them.⁶³

Or in Guy Debord's exhortation, "In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they end there."⁶⁴ When we finally recognize our persona as our misrecognized person, as the stage of our liberal subjectivity, we may experience ourselves genuinely as objects of objects, causes of causes, at home in our bodily becoming. This artistic-philosophical urge tracks to "Montaigne's method," that "peculiar form of his *Essays*" in which "he follows his own inner rhythm, which, though constantly induced and maintained by things, is not bound to them, but freely skips from one to another."⁶⁵ Michel de Montaigne's founding humanist rejection of self-mastering piety may found a posthumanist rejection of neoliberalism's equally self-mutilating theology.

DIALECTICAL REVOLT

A pedagogical revolt *through* neoliberal inhumanity welcomes to our campuses—those porous enclosures of self-serious cerebration—the means of their remaking: laughter, love, play, anxiety, acedia, tricksters, satire, aggression, *ressentiment*, communism—above all a fidelity to what eludes language. If a radical pedagogy is a chimera, we ought to imagine it for that very reason. We need first, not last, to crack open the walls of the universities, classrooms, all plodding disciplinary routines now rendered reactionary. Should we disrupt our classes and ideologies with the affective silences and perceptive secrets of fugitive person(a)s, the threat posed to neoliberalism will ward off liberal retrenchment as well.

In his memoir Paul Feyerabend says, "I think many young people . . . see the world in a special way, and yet the slightest pressure can make them see it differently. A good teacher respects this instability." And nurtures it in

the revolutionary spirit of all “young people.” He then remembers “Oswald Thomas, a well-known figure in Viennese adult education. Once a month, Thomas assembled about two thousand people in a large meadow outside Vienna, turned off the streetlights, and explained the constellations. He told scientific details about the stars and somewhat less scientific stories about the legendary animals, gods, humans, that populated the sky.”⁶⁶

NOTES

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3 | Class Composition and Hierarchy

All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.

—George Orwell, *Animal Farm*

The market has always been one of exploitation and thereby of domination, insuring the class structure of society. However, the productive process of advanced capitalism has altered the form of domination: the technological veil covers the brute presence and the operation of the class interest in the merchandise.

—Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*

3.1 Karl Marx's Model of the Class Society

RALF DAHRENDORF

THE SOCIAL ETYMOLOGY OF THE CONCEPT OF CLASS

Evaluative shifts of meaning have accompanied the concept of class throughout its history. When the Roman censors introduced the word *classis* to divide the population into tax groups, they may not have anticipated the eventful future of this category. Yet even their classification implied at least the possibility of evaluative distinctions: on the one end of their classification were the *assidui*, who might well be proud of their 100,000 *as*; on the other end were the *proletarii*, whose only “property” consisted in their numerous offspring—*proles*—and who were outdone only by the *lumpenproletariat* of the *capite censi*, those counted by their heads. Just as the American term “income bracket,” although originally no more than a statistical category, touches upon the most vulnerable point of social inequality, it was true for the *classes* of ancient Rome that they divided the population into more than statistical units. “The movie was classy,” teenagers say, meaning “high-class,” “first-class.” Similarly, to say that some Roman was *classis* or *classicus* meant that he belonged to the *prima classis*, to the upper class—unless he was explicitly described as a “fifth-class” proletarian. Since Gellius we know the adjective *classicus* in its application to “first-class” artists and works of art, a usage which

survives in our word “classical” and was eventually related to the authors of the term themselves and their times: they lived in “classical” antiquity.

When more recently sociologists remembered the word, they naturally gave it a slightly different connotation. Initially the word “class” was used—for example, by [Adam] Ferguson and [John] Millar in the eighteenth century—simply to distinguish social strata, as we should say today, by their rank or wealth. In this sense the word “class” can be found in all European languages in the late eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century the concept of class gradually took on a more definite coloring. Adam Smith had already spoken of the “poor” or “laboring class.” In the works of [David] Ricardo and [Andrew] Ure, [Henri de] Saint-Simon and [Charles] Fourier, and of course in those of [Friedrich] Engels and [Karl] Marx the “class of capitalists” makes its appearance beside the “laboring class,” the “rich” beside the “poor class,” the “bourgeoisie” beside the “proletariat” (which has accompanied the concept of class from its Roman origins). Since this particular concept of social class was first applied in the middle of the nineteenth century, its history has been as eventful as that of the society for which it was designed.

Indeed, the greatness and fatality of his work become apparent in Marx’s theory of class. In this theory, the three roots of his thought are joined. Marx adopted the word from the early British political economists; its application to “capitalists” and “proletarians” stems from the French “utopian” socialists; the conception of the class struggle is based on [Georg] Hegel’s dialectics. The theory of class provides the problematic link between sociological analysis and philosophical speculation in the work of Marx. Both can be separated, and have to be separated, but in this process the theory of class is cut in two; for it is as essential for Marx’s philosophy of history as it is for his analysis of the dynamics of capitalist society.

Marx postponed the systematic presentation of his theory of class until death took the pen from his hand. The irony has often been noted that the last (fifty-second) chapter of the last (third) volume of *Capital*, which bears the title “The Classes,” has remained unfinished. After little more than one page the text ends with the lapidary remark of its editor, Engels: “Here the manuscript breaks off.”

The following elements of Marx’s theory of class appear particularly worth emphasizing for sociological analysis:

It is important to realize what [Theodor] Geiger called the “heuristic purpose behind the concept of class.”¹ Wherever Marx used the concept in a sociological sense, he was not concerned with describing an existing state of society. He was concerned, rather, with the analysis of certain laws of social development and of the forces involved in this development. To use the misleading terms of

modern sociology, the heuristic purpose of the concept of class was for Marx not “static” but “dynamic,” not “descriptive” but “analytical.” What these terms may mean and what they cannot mean will have to be discussed later in some detail. Here it is sufficient to emphasize that for Marx the theory of class was not a theory of a cross-section of society arrested in time, in particular not a theory of social stratification, but a tool for the explanation of changes in total societies.

This heuristic purpose explains the often criticized two-class model underlying the dynamic theory of Marx. Had Marx wanted to describe his society with photographic accuracy, this model would indeed have been most unsatisfactory. As a matter of fact, Marx does refer occasionally (without always using his concept of class in an entirely unambiguous manner) to a multitude of classes. He refers to the “two great categories into which the interest of the bourgeoisie is divided—land ownership and capital,”² to the petty bourgeoisie as a “transitional class,”³ and to the class of small peasants.⁴

But the legitimacy of assuming for analytical purposes the dominance of only two conflicting classes must not blind us to the fact that Marx has linked with his two-class model a number of additional postulates whose legitimacy appears rather more dubious. For Marx the category of class defines one side of an antagonism which entails the dominant issues of conflict in every society as well as the direction of its development. This means for Marx that (a) every conflict capable of generating structural change is a class conflict, (b) the contents of class conflict always represent the dominant issues of social conflict, and (c) the two classes stand in the relation of Hegel’s “thesis” and “antithesis,” in the sense that one is characterized by the affirmation (or possession) of those features of which the other is the complete negation.

Marx states quite clearly that class conflicts do not originate in differences of income, or of the sources of income. His classes are not tax classes in the sense of the Roman censors. Rather, the determinant of classes is “property.” Property, however, must not be understood in terms of purely passive wealth, but as an effective force of production, as “ownership of means of production” and its denial to others. In this sense, the “relations of production”—i.e., the authority relations resulting from the distribution of effective property in the realm of (industrial) production—constitute the ultimate determinant of the formation of classes and the development of class conflicts. The capitalists possess factories and machines, and buy the only property of the proletarians, their labor power, in order to produce a surplus value with these means of production and augment their capital. But our question cannot be answered all that easily. The role of property in Marx’s theory of class poses a problem of interpretation, and on this interpretation the validity of Marx’s theory of class stands or falls. Does Marx understand, by the relations of property or production, the relations of factual control and subordination in the enter-

prises of industrial production—or merely the authority relations insofar as they are based on the legal title of property? Does he conceive of property in a loose (sociological) sense—i.e., in terms of the exclusiveness of legitimate control (in which the manager also exercises property functions)—or merely as a statutory property right in connection with such control? Is property for Marx a special case of authority—or, vice versa, authority a special case of property? These questions are of considerable significance. If one works with the narrow concept of property, class conflict is the specific characteristic of a form of production which rests on the union of ownership and control. In this case a society in which control is exercised, for example, by state functionaries, has by definition neither classes nor class conflicts. If, on the other hand, one works with the wider concept of property, class structure is determined by the authority structure of the enterprise, and the category of class becomes at least potentially applicable to all “relations of production.”

Marx does not always make his answer to our questions entirely clear. But it can be shown that his analyses are essentially based on the narrow, legal concept of property. This procedure, and this procedure only, enables Marx to link his sociology with his philosophy of history—a brilliant attempt, but at the same time a fault that robs his sociological analyses of stringency and conviction, a fault made no more acceptable by the fact that orthodox Marxists have remained faithful to their master in this point to the present day.

One of the critical pivots of Marx's theory of class is the undisputed identification of economic and political power and authority. Although classes are founded on the “relations of production”—i.e., the distribution of effective property in the narrow sphere of commodity production—they become socially significant only in the political sphere. But both these spheres are inseparable. “The political power” of a class arises for Marx “from the relations of production.”⁵ The relations of production are “the final secret, the hidden basis of the whole construction of society”;⁶ industrial classes are *eo ipso* also social classes, and industrial class conflict is political class conflict. Nowhere has Marx explicitly discussed the basis of this empirical proposition—nor has he seen sufficiently clearly that it is an empirical proposition rather than a postulate or premise. The thesis that political conditions are determined by industrial conditions seems to stem, for him, from the generalized assertion of an absolute and universal primacy of production over all other structures of economy and society.

Classes do not constitute themselves as such until they participate in political conflicts as organized groups. Although Marx occasionally uses the concept of class in a less determinate, more comprehensive sense, a multitude of statements leave little doubt that for him class formation and class conflict were phenomena belonging to the sphere of politics. “As long as the proletariat has not sufficiently developed to organize itself as a class, . . . the

struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie has not yet assumed a political character.⁷ This means conversely that the carriers of class conflict have organized themselves as classes, and have become classes, only if class conflict has assumed a political character.

The work of Marx falls into two separable parts. [One part is scientific, based on sociology, and the other is based on philosophy that is unprovable.] Marx's theory of class contains elements of both kinds. Indeed, nowhere has Marx linked both kinds of propositions as cleverly, and hence as deceptively, as in his theory of class.

In a logically independent approach Marx investigates the society of his time. There he notes empirically three factors, among others: (a) the presence of a conflict between social groups (classes), (b) the presence of effective private property, and (c) the presence of relations of domination and subjection. He believes furthermore that he can discern in this society a tendency for private property to be abolished and replaced by communal property—an observation which at least to some extent has proved correct. And what happens if effective private property disappears? It is precisely at this point that Marx jumps from sociology into philosophy and back by introducing his undoubtedly brilliant trick of definition. By asserting the dependence of classes on relations of domination and subjection, and the dependence of these relations on the possession of or exclusion from effective private capital,⁸ he makes on the one hand empirically private property and on the other hand philosophically social classes, the central factor of his analyses. One can retrace step by step the thought process to which Marx has succumbed at this point. It is not the thought process of the empirical scientist who seeks only piecemeal knowledge and expects only piecemeal progress but that of the system builder who suddenly finds that everything fits! For if private property disappears (empirical hypothesis), then there are no longer classes (trick of definition)! If there are no longer any classes, there is no alienation (speculative postulate). The realm of liberty is realized on earth (philosophical idea). Had Marx, conversely, defined private property by authority relations, his empirical observation would not have “fitted,” and he would have had to drop his philosophy of history. For effective private property may disappear empirically, but authority relations can do so only by the magic trick of the system maniac.⁹

Perhaps a Marx without the Marxian philosophy of history would have realized that power and authority are not tied to the legal title of property. Marx himself could not realize this, and certainly could not admit it, for had he done so, his philosophical conception of the classless society would have become impossible both empirically and intellectually.

There is, moreover, a strange irony in the fact that the same Marx who so often attacked the uncritical assertion that private property is universal

introduces the same assertion in a concealed way but equally uncritically by speaking of the universality of classes, which for him are tied to the presence of private property.

A society is classless if it is “powerless”—i.e., if there is no authority exercised in it at all, or if such authority is distributed equally among all citizens. But in this sense the category of classless society is sociologically meaningless. It may be possible to conceive of a society in which all differences of *income* and *prestige* are leveled and which is therefore “stratumless,” but it is hardly possible to imagine a society in which there is no differentiation of roles in terms of legitimate *power*. Permanent anarchism is socially Utopian. Any society, and, indeed, any social organization, requires some differentiation into positions of domination and positions of subjection. No matter what the formal nature of the authority mechanism, it is a functional imperative of social organizations. Since classes can be explained in terms of the differential distribution of authority, there is no sociological substance in the assumption of a classless society devoid of differentiated authority structures.

However, the idea of a classless society may be understood in a second sense. It is possible to conceive of a society whose structure contains positions equipped with different authority rights but which does not enable any group of persons to occupy these positions regularly and exclusively. The same might hold in imperatively coordinated associations other than the state—e.g., in industry. Associations may be governed by the principle of an alternating chairmanship, according to which the incumbency of positions of domination may or may not be patterned. The collective settlements (*kibbutzim*) of Israel seem to provide a case in point. At least originally it was stipulated that every member in turn was to occupy the positions of leadership for relatively short periods of time. In view of examples of this kind, it seems plausible to argue that where there is no group which is capable of monopolizing the positions of authority, it is virtually impossible for coherent conflict groups to emerge, and the society or association in question is therefore classless. To be sure, this is a kind of classlessness rather different from that of the Utopian anarchy; still, it cannot be denied that it makes sense to speak of classlessness in this case also. We might say that societies and associations governed by a permanently “alternating chairmanship” are classless so far as social mobility is concerned, for it is not the structure of positions but the fluctuation of personnel that in this case prevents the formation of classes and conflict between them.

NOTES

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2. Karl Marx, *Der 18. Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* (Berlin, 1946), 43.
3. *Ibid.*, 49.
4. *Ibid.*, 118.
5. Karl Marx, “Die moralisierende Kritik und die kritische Moral,” in *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels*, 3rd ed., ed. Franz Mehring (Stuttgart, Germany: Dietz, 1920), 455.
6. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (Berlin: Dietz, 1953), 3:842.
7. Karl Marx, *Das Elend der Philosophie* (Berlin: Dietz, 1947), 142.
8. This assertion is, of course, understandable in view of the factual identity of ownership and control in early industrial capitalism but unpardonable as a generalization.
9. The thesis of this argument was intimated first by [Joseph] Schumpeter. See J. A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1943), 19–20.

3.2 Sex, Race, and Class

SELMA JAMES

There has been enough confusion generated when sex, race, and class have confronted each other as separate and even conflicting entities. That they are separate entities is self-evident. That they have proven themselves to be not separate, inseparable, is harder to discern. Yet if sex and race are pulled away from class, virtually all that remains is the truncated, provincial, sectarian politics of the white male metropolitan Left. I hope to show in barest outline, first, that the working-class movement is something other than what that Left has ever conceived it to be. Second, locked within the contradiction between the discrete entity of sex or race and the totality of class is the greatest deterrent to working-class power and at the same time the creative energy to achieve that power.

Beginning with the *female* (caste) experience, we redefined class to include women.¹ That redefinition was based on the unwaged labor of the housewife. We put it this way: “Since Marx, it has been clear that capital rules and develops through the wage—that is, that the foundation of capitalist society was the wage laborer and his or her direct exploitation. What has been neither clear nor assumed by the organizations of the working-class movement is that precisely through the wage has the exploitation of the non-wage laborer been organized. This exploitation has been even more effective because the lack of a wage hid it. . . . *Where women are concerned their labor appears to be a personal service outside of capital.*”²

But if the relation of caste to class where women are concerned presents itself in a hidden, mystified form, this mystification is not unique to women. Before we confront race, let us take an apparent diversion.

The least powerful in the society are our children, also unwaged in a wage labor society. They were once (and in tribal society, for example, still are) accepted as an integral part of the productive activity of the community. The work they did was part of the total social labor and was acknowledged as such. Where capital is extending or has extended its rule, children are taken away from others in the community and forced to go to school, against which the number of rebels is growing daily. Is their powerlessness a class question? Is their struggle against school the class struggle? We believe it is. Schools are institutions organized by capital to achieve its purpose through and against the child. "Capital . . . sent them to school not only because they are in the way of others' more 'productive' labor or only to indoctrinate them. The rule of capital through the wage compels every able-bodied person to function, under the law of division of labor, and to function in ways that are if not immediately, then ultimately profitable to the expansion and extension of the rule of capital. That, fundamentally, is the meaning of school. *Where children are concerned, their labor appears to be learning for their own benefit.*"³

So here are two sections of the working class whose activities, one in the home and the other in the school, *appear* to be outside of the capitalist wage labor relation because the workers themselves are wageless. *In reality*, their activities are facets of capitalist production and its division of labor.

One, housewives, are involved in the production and (what is the same thing) reproduction of workers, what Marx calls *labor power*. They service those who are daily destroyed by working for wages and who need to be daily renewed; and they care for and discipline those who are being prepared to work when they grow up.

The other, children, are those who from birth are the objects of this care and discipline, who are trained in homes, in schools, and in front of the television to be future workers. But this has two aspects.

In the first place, for labor power to be reproduced in the form of children, these children must be coerced into accepting discipline and especially the discipline of working, of being exploited in order to be able to eat. In addition, however, they must be disciplined and trained to perform a certain kind of work. The labor that capital wants done is divided and each category parceled out internationally as the life work, the destiny, the identity of specific sets of workers. The phrase often used to describe this is the international division of labor. We will say more of this later, but for now let the West Indian mother of a seven-year-old sum up her son's education with precision: "They're choosing the street sweepers now."

Those of us in the feminist movement who have torn the final veil away from this international capitalist division of labor to expose women's and children's *class* position, which was hidden by the particularity of their *caste* position, learned a good deal of this from the Black movement. A mass movement teaches less by what it says than by the power it exercises, which, clearing away the debris of appearances, tells it like it is.

What gave us the boldness to break, fearless of the consequences, was the power of the Black movement. We found that redefining class went hand-in-hand with rediscovering a Marx the Left had never understood.

There were deeper reasons too why caste and class seemed contradictory. It appears often that the interests of Blacks are contradicted by the interests of Whites, and it is similar with men and women. To grasp the *class* interest when there seems not one but two, three, four, each contradicting the other, seems to be one of the most difficult tasks that confront us in both theory and practice.

Another source of confusion is that not all women, children, or Black men are working class. This is only to say that within the movements in which these form are layers whose struggle tends to be aimed at moving up in the capitalist hierarchy rather than at destroying it. And so within each movement there is a struggle about which class interest the movement will serve. But this is the history also of white male workers' movements. There is no class "purity," not even in shop floor organizations. The struggle by workers *against* organizations they formed there and in the society generally—trade unions, labor parties, etc.—is the class struggle.

Let's put the relation of caste to class another way. The word *culture* is often used to show that class concepts are narrow, philistine, inhuman. Exactly the opposite is the case. A national culture that has evolved over decades or centuries may appear to deny that society's relation to international capitalism. It is a subject too wide to go into deeply here, but one basic point can be quickly clarified.

The lifestyle unique to themselves that a people develop once they are enmeshed by capitalism, in response to and in rebellion against it, cannot be understood at all except as the totality of their capitalist lives. To delimit culture is to reduce it to a decoration of daily life.⁴ Culture is plays and poetry about the exploited; ceasing to wear miniskirts and taking to trousers instead; the clash between the soul of Black Baptism and the guilt and sin of White Protestantism. Culture is also the shrill of the alarm clock that rings at 6 A.M. when a Black woman in London wakes her children to get them ready for the baby-minder. Culture is how cold she feels at the bus stop and then how hot in the crowded bus. Culture is how you feel on Monday morning at eight when you clock in, wishing it were Friday, wishing your life away. Culture is making the tea while your man watches the news on the telly.

And culture is an “irrational woman” walking out of the kitchen into the sitting room and without a word turning off the telly “for no reason at all.”

From where does this culture spring that is so different from a man’s if you are a woman and different too from a White woman’s if you are a Black woman? Is it auxiliary to the class struggle (as the White Left has it), or is it more fundamental than the class struggle (as Black nationalists and radical feminists have it) because it is special to your sex, your race, your age, your nationality, and the moment in time when you are these things?

Our identity, our social roles, the way we are seen, appear to be disconnected from our capitalist functions. To be liberated from them (or through them) appears to be independent of our liberation from capitalist wage slavery. In my view, identity—caste—is the very substance of class.

Here is the “strange place” where we found the key to the relation of class to caste written down most succinctly. Here is where the international division of labor is posed as power relations within the working class. It is volume 1 of Marx’s *Capital*: “Manufacture . . . develops a hierarchy of labor powers, to which there corresponds a scale of wages. If, on the one hand, the individual laborers are appropriated and annexed for life by a limited function; on the other hand, the various operations of the hierarchy are parceled out among the laborers according to both their natural and their acquired capabilities.”⁵

In two sentences is laid out the deep material connection between racism, sexism, national chauvinism, and the chauvinism of the generations who are working for wages against children and pensioners who are wageless, who are “dependents.”

A hierarchy of labor powers and a scale of wages to correspond. Racism and sexism training us to develop and acquire certain capabilities at the expense of all others. Then these acquired capabilities are taken to be our nature, fixing our functions for life, and fixing also the quality of our mutual relations. So planting cane or tea is not a job for White people, and changing nappies is not a job for men, and beating children is not violence. Race, sex, age, nation, each an indispensable element of the international division of labor. *Our feminism bases itself on a hitherto invisible stratum of the hierarchy of labor powers—the housewife—to which there corresponds no wage at all.*

Divided by the capitalist organization of society into factory, office, school, plantation, home, and street, we are divided too by the very institutions which claim to represent our struggle collectively as a class.

In the metropolis, the Black movement was the first section of the class massively to take its autonomy from these organizations and to break out of the containment of the struggle only in the factory. When Black workers

burn the center of a city, however, White Left eyes, especially if they are trade union eyes, see race, not class.

The women's movement was the next major movement of the class in the metropolis to find for itself a power base outside the factory as well as in it. Like the Black movement before them, to be organizationally autonomous of capital and its institutions, women and their movement had also to be autonomous of that part of the "hierarchy of labor powers" that capital used specifically against them. For Blacks it was Whites. For women it was men. For Black women it is both.

Strange to think that even today, when confronted with the autonomy of the Black movement or the autonomy of the women's movement, there are those who talk about this "dividing the working class." Strange indeed when our experience has told us that in order for the working class to unite in spite of the divisions that are inherent in its very structure—factory versus plantation versus home versus school—those at the lowest levels of the hierarchy must themselves find the key to their weakness, must themselves find the strategy that will attack the point and shatter it, must themselves find their own modes of struggle.

It is not the first time either that a women's movement received its impetus from the exercise of power by Black people. The Black slave who formed the abolitionist movement and organized the Underground Railroad for the escape to the North also gave White women—and again the more privileged of them—a chance, an occasion to transcend the limitations in which the female personality was imprisoned. Women, trained always to do for others, left their homes not to free themselves—that would have been outrageous—but to free "the slave." They were encouraged by Black women, ex-slaves like Sojourner Truth, who suffered as the breeders of labor power on the plantation. But once those White women had taken their first decisive step out of the feminine mold, they confronted more sharply their own situation. They had to defend their right, as women, to speak in public against slavery. They were refused, for example, seating at the abolitionist conference of 1840 in London because they were women. By 1848 at Seneca Falls, New York, they called their own conference, for women's rights. There was a male speaker. He was a leading abolitionist. He was Black. He had been a slave. His name was Frederick Douglass.

The strategy of feminist class struggle is, as we have said, based on the unwaged woman in the home. Whether she also works for wages outside the home, her labor of producing and reproducing the working class weighs her down, weakens her capacity to struggle—she doesn't even have time. Her position in the wage structure is low especially but not only if she is Black. And even if she is relatively well placed in the hierarchy of labor powers (rare

enough!), she remains defined as a sexual object of men. Why? Because as long as most women are housewives, part of whose function in reproducing labor power is to be the sexual object of men, no woman can escape that identity. We demand wages for the work we do in the home. And that demand for a wage from the state is, first, a demand to be autonomous of men on whom we are now dependent. Second, we demand money without working out of the home and open for the first time the possibility of refusing forced labor both in waged work and in the home itself.

What is their role in the revolution? How can the unwaged struggle without the lever of the wage and the factory? We do not pose the answers—we can't. But we pose the questions in a way that assumes that the unemployed have not to go to work in order to subvert capitalist society.

How the working class will ultimately unite organizationally we don't know. We do know that up to now many of us have been told to forget our own needs in some wider interest that was never wide enough to include us. And so we have learned by bitter experience that *nothing unified and revolutionary will be formed until each section of the exploited will have made its own autonomous power felt.*

Power to the sisters and therefore to the class.

NOTES

This piece is excerpted from Selma James, *Sex, Race, and Class: The Perspective of Winning: A Selection of Writings, 1952–2011* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012). Reprinted by permission of PM Press (<http://www.pmpress.org>).

1. Editors' note: In this text, James uses the word *we* to refer to herself and Mariarosa Dalla Costa, with whom she coauthored *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (1972).

2. Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, 3rd ed. (Bristol, UK: Falling Wall Press, 1975), 28 (emphasis in original).

3. Ibid. (emphasis in original).

4. For the best demystification of culture I know, which shows, for example, how West Indian cricket has carried in its heart racial and class conflicts, see C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London: Hutchinson, 1963).

5. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Modern Library, 1906), 384.

3.3 Wageless of the World

SELMA JAMES

The problem of the revolution is the unity of the working class internationally. The working class is divided by the power of those whose work is

waged (men) over those whose work is unwaged (women). But the hierarchy within the working class is by no means confined to the power of men, identified with the wage, over women, identified by wageless and therefore invisible work. There is also the power of the waged worker in the metropolis over the unwaged worker in the third world. Both are fundamental to the capitalist division of labor nationally and internationally.

In the same way as the proletarian character of the laborer in the home is hidden by the lack of a wage, so the proletarian character of the laborer on the land, "the peasant," land-owning or landless, is hidden by the wagelessness of that labor.

The majority of Latin American women are either Indian or of Indian extraction, existing on subsistence agriculture and doing a double load of unwaged labor: both as *jornaleras* (day workers), *minifundistas* (smallholders) or *ejiditarias* (collective farm workers), and as housewives. The unit of production is the family. Women's work in the home, where they transform primary materials into the few consumer goods of food and clothing, is a fundamental aspect of the production of that family unit.

Even where there is payment in the form of a wage (to *los jornaleros*) or in the form of payment for sale of crops, it is the man who probably receives it. Women and children who work alongside him work for capital through his command. But at least the work of women and children is undisguised; it is recognized as work. Which is more than can be said for the urban housewife who is directly dominated by the wage; her housework, being unwaged, is not considered work at all.

So it is that capital has seized on every mode of production, and on the "train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions" that spring from these modes, to exploit all those temporarily trapped in them and reinforces that exploitation by the prejudices and opinions they generate, from which women suffer most and *in a most specific manner*. To obscure and thus ignore the specific nature of the exploitation of women (and children), and the specific and autonomous nature of the struggles this *must* produce, with the blackmail of universal poverty or universal repression is to resort to a moralism that in fact is a political attack on the least powerful—and therefore of course on the poorest and most repressed. And when the least powerful are attacked, all the forces of subversion are weakened.

It is impossible to speak of the relation of women to capital *anywhere* without at the same time confronting the question of development versus underdevelopment. It is even more unavoidable when it is women of the third world of whom we speak, since their situation cannot be wrested from the general context of predominant underdevelopment; rather they are a honed

edge with which to approach the Gordian knot that confronts *all* working-class struggle in the third world.

WORKING FOR CAPITAL

The tendency has been to subsume all those who are not city proletarians under the term “peasant.” Once we assume that the basic division within the working class internationally is between the waged and wageless, and that *to be wageless is not necessarily to be outside of the capitalist wage relation*, every mode of labor that exists today must be reexamined to determine the social relation that it reproduces: whether there is surplus labor, if that surplus labor is stolen (appropriated by someone other than the laborer), and if so, by whom—in other words, whether and where capital has transformed precapitalist modes of labor into modes of its own self-expansion. Even the subsistence farming family of Mexico, for example, which produces no material surplus may be working usefully for capital; *braceras* and *braceros* provide a cheap and intimidated reserve army of labor, particularly for the farms of California and Texas.¹ Women on that “unproductive” subsistence farm, with our unending work, have produced that army of labor.

In a Mexican village one family may invest in a television. Other families around must pay to see it—must find the money to pay to see it, must find the job or grow the crop *or make the struggle for the wage without the work*, which will yield the money to pay to see it. Or reappropriate another just like it or bigger—that is, make a struggle for *the wage without the work* in a way that bypasses the money form.

Once we have seen it, or heard the grating sounds of the inexpensive model of transistor radio in the village or in the field, that person, that family, that community, has stepped beyond any definition of itself as “peasant.” When the woman from an area of underdevelopment in the heart of Europe, such as a village in Spain, sees a Hollywood film, the plot is secondary to the technology of the North American kitchen (which, nevertheless, is still the North American *woman’s* place). So we are ready to demand in Mexico, Tanzania, India, and Spain all of the wealth that exists but of which we have been deprived. For on the media they tell us about or even show us all the products of technology that third world peoples are denied. They have sent the media to give one message, but we have absorbed quite another. For we have come to the media with a mind crammed with the refusal of the bitterness of our experience. That media presents a picture, however distorted, of a whole world that peasants of Lenin’s day or of Zapata’s never knew existed. It pictures a range of goods and therefore a range of possibilities that *nobody* of

Lenin's day or of Zapata's knew, since they didn't exist *anywhere*. Our experiences as exploited women, urban or rural, third world or metropolitan, are unique in each case. *Our needs and our desires are increasingly international and universal*: to be free, to be free of the labor that has worn us down over centuries, to be free of domination and dependence on men. We repudiate the assumption that we who are not socialized, collectivized, unionized, are the "backward ones." The backward technology with which they have burdened us is no measure of our own aspirations. And that is our dilemma.

REFUSING THEIR DEVELOPMENT

In the metropolis when we demand a wage from the state, we are told that we can get a wage in the offices or factories, which are waiting to suck up what little of our lives the washing machine has left free. Millions of us are driven there daily by an inflation that is transforming bringing home a wage—and therefore doing a double shift—into another household duty, another chore, another obligation of the wife. In Mexico, with a 40 percent rate of unemployment or underemployment, to propose that women who want a wage take a second job in factories, offices, and so on (if they don't already have one on the land) is even more laughable. None of us wants that second job—not those who have it and the pittance of a wage that may go with it or those who desperately need a wage despite the sixteen-hour day of the full-time housewife. More work will never sweeten our bitterness. Yet third world women (in fact *all* women) are told there is no other solution but to accept this "development," to accept, that is, more rationalized exploitation, if they are lucky enough to get it in that sea of wagelessness. There is only one development today in the world, and that is capitalist development, even greater exploitation than we have suffered up to now. That is the price we have traditionally paid for the wage. We will still bear, train, and care for the new generation while we are "benefiting" from the assembly line of their development. Also, because so many of us are wageless, they will get the very few they hire cut-rate. Passively to accept that development is to accept a development of slavery, the opposite of its abolition.

For us in the metropolis to demand a wage from the State for the work we are doing in the home is our only real choice, so that we can massively refuse that job and the second, waged, job we do. As capital's crisis deepens it is not clear what place metropolitan women will have in its plans. One thing, however, is already clear. Though we are surrounded by development, they have begun to plead poverty and austerity and are expecting women to be the prime shock absorbers. When we demand wages for housework in whatever form—child care that we control; free birth control and abortion

that do not sicken, kill, or sterilize us; the socialization of our work on our terms to liberate time for ourselves; and most important, money we can call our own—they now say here what they have always said in the third world to every demand by women: “The till is empty.”

Our great advantage in the metropolis is that the wealth stolen from all of us is where we are, on the spot, to demand back. For those in the third world, it is infinitely more difficult to demand the return of the wealth that our combined labor has created. For most of us the dilemma is that this wealth is not where we are. This poses enormous problems of organization and mobilization of power. Yet we have no choice. The State of every third world country that has tried to impose development in the form of “aid” and/or investment has ultimately had to defend that development with arms against the working class. When it is proposed that the road to the new society passes through our increased productivity, the Chilean firing squads are there to block the exits to our own road.²

Since in the past we have lost when we didn’t ask enough, we cannot do worse by demanding everything. And though the wealth is not on the spot in the third world, the agents of its continued expropriation are always close at hand. The State is only partially made up of the government and Rockefeller Foundations; these are the executors outside the factory of the multinational corporations. Together they plan our exploitation, its quality and intensity, as part of an international plan that encompasses every country, females and males, children and adults, the working-class employed and unemployed, the waged and unwaged of that class, the urbanized and the ruralized of that class. It is against them, and the (usually U.S.) arms that enforce their plan and their will, that such demands for wages will ultimately have to be made by all of us women. For though the dilemma of the third world is that the wealth of our combined labor is in the metropolis, the third world can draw on the wealth of our combined struggle to get it back.

To raise our voices internationally to demand our wage and an end to the work we do, which has brought no wage in the home and very little wage (if any) out of it, to demand that *we* develop and that technology be the servant of *our* development, the opposite of our being at the service of a developing technology the benefits of which we are then denied, is to completely revolutionize the terms of struggle. It is to articulate the internationalization of our struggle and to raise our power at every moment of the international capitalist circuit.

In 1971, we said: “Women of the third world have not yet spoken of the effects of colonial rule and industrialization on them and on the traditional family. When they do, the horrors we now associate with capitalism and imperialism will gain new dimensions. We need a woman’s history of

imperialism, and of the division of labor between the industrial and agricultural worlds.”³

That history has begun to emerge, as a weapon in the developing struggle. Power to the sisters and therefore to the class internationally.

NOTES

This piece is excerpted from Selma James, “Wageless of the World,” in *Sex, Race, and Class: The Perspective of Winning: A Selection of Writings, 1952–2011* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012), 102–109. Reprinted by permission of PM Press (<http://www.pmpress.org>). The essay was written in 1975.

1. The American state’s intimidation of these workers (traditionally with the help of armed vigilantes, official and unofficial) is posed as a protection for native American workers. To its joy, a trade union with membership overwhelmingly of Americans of *bracero* descent has supported the recent clampdown on immigration from Mexico. Which, of course, only means that the wages of the “illegal” entrant can be even lower. See “Ruling on Mexican Aliens Stirs Chicanos’ Job Fears,” *New York Times*, December 2, 1974. Working-class organization, which is confined to national borders and to the trade unionist struggle for jobs, always results in our scabbing on each other.

2. The Chilean housewife was of course part of the working-class resistance to productivity. Yet that was drowned by the din of a carefully constructed mythology of the Chilean reactionary housewife, which served the Right *and* the Left internationally, not only to obscure the revolutionary struggle of Chilean women but to undercut the struggle of women everywhere. It was in particular the Left’s occasion to give vent to their rage at our audacity in organizing without them and against their leadership. (Update 2012: The organizations of relatives, mainly women, of people who disappeared or were jailed under the military dictatorship in Chile and elsewhere have since obliterated this sexist view. The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, whose courage and determination spearheaded the movement that defeated the dictatorship there, are the most famous, but such women’s movements can be found all over the world.)

3. Edith Hoshino Altbach, ed., *From Feminism to Liberation* (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1971), 197.

3.4 Hierarchy of Wages and Incomes

CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS

Of course, the existence of a hierarchy of command, of wages, and of incomes is today “justified” by a host of arguments. Before discussing them on their own, it must be noted that these arguments very clearly are ideological in character: they are made in order to justify, with an only apparent logic, a reality to which they are only remotely related, and they are formulated on the basis of presuppositions that themselves are never brought to light. Let us also note that these arguments are suffering the effects of what also has been happening for decades to society’s official ideology as a whole.

This ideology is decomposing before our very eyes; it no longer can present a coherent face to the world, it no longer dares to invoke values no one now accepts, and it is unable to invent other ones.

The central point of today's official ideology concerning hierarchy is its justification of wage and income hierarchy on the basis of the command hierarchy, which in its turn is defended as resting on a hierarchy or scale of "knowledge" or of "qualifications" or of "talents" or of "responsibilities" or of a "shortage" in specialized skills. It will be noticed immediately that these scales neither coincide nor correspond with each other either in logic or in reality: there may be (and there is) a dearth of garbage collectors and a glut of professors; great scientists have no "responsibility," whereas some laboring people possessing very little "knowledge" have daily responsibility for the life and death of hundreds or thousands of persons. Second, every attempt to make a "synthesis" of these different criteria, to "weight" them, is necessarily and inevitably arbitrary. Finally, just as arbitrary and without a shadow of possible justification is the move from such a scale, supposedly established, to actual wage differentials: why is one more year of studies, or one more diploma, worth one hundred dollars more a month, and not ten dollars or one thousand dollars?

It is said that the command and wage hierarchy is justified by and founded on a hierarchy or scale of knowledge. In a business firm (or in society) today, however, those who have the most "knowledge" are not those who are in command or who obtain the highest salaries. True, the upper echelons of the hierarchy are recruited especially among those who have "diplomas." However, beyond the fact that it would be ridiculous to identify knowledge with diplomas, it is not those with "the most knowledge" that ascend the command and wage ladder, but rather those most adept at competing in the struggles that unfold within the business firm's managerial bureaucracy. An industrial firm is practically never directed by the most "learned" of its engineers; that person is usually confined to a research bureau. And on the societal level, we know that scientists, great or not, have no power and are paid only a small fraction of what the head of an average business firm is paid. Neither in the firm nor in society do power and high incomes go today to those who "have the greatest knowledge"; power and money are in the hands of a bureaucracy, within which promotion has nothing to do with "knowledge," or "technical abilities," but is determined rather by the ability to survive the struggles between cliques and clans (an ability of no economic and social value, save for those who possess it) and by one's connections with big capital (in Western countries) or with the ruling political party (in Eastern countries).

What has just been said goes to show as well what ought to be made of the argument used to justify hierarchy on the basis of differences in people's

“abilities.” When one considers the wage and power differences that really matter—not those between a semiskilled worker and a tool maker, but those between manual workers on the one hand and top management on the other—it is clear that what is “rewarded” is not the ability to do a job well, but the ability to bet on the right horse.

Arguments justifying hierarchy on the basis of responsibilities carry no more weight than the others we have examined. A railway-crossing guard or an air-traffic controller has in his hands the lives of several hundred people a day, yet he is paid many times less than a tenth of the salary of the CEO of the national railway line or of Air France, who has no one’s life in his hands.

The argument according to which wage hierarchy is explained and justified by the relative scarcity of different skills or types of work hardly merits serious discussion. Such scarcity, when it does exist, can drive to a higher level than before the pay of a category of workers for a shorter or longer period of time, but an increase of this kind in the pay rate will never extend beyond certain narrow limits. Whatever the relative “scarcity” of semiskilled workers and the relative “glut” of lawyers, the latter group will always be paid much more than the former.

All this concerns what we have called the ideology of justification for hierarchy. There also exists an apparently more “respectable” discourse, that of academic or Marxist economic science. We cannot here undertake to refute it in detailed fashion. Let us say summarily that, for the academic economist, the wage is supposed to correspond to the “marginal product of work”—that is to say, to what the hour of work of one additional worker “adds” to the product (or, what boils down to the same thing, to what would be subtracted from the product if one worker were to be removed from production). Without entering into the theoretical discussion of this conception in general—its untenability can easily be proved—its absurdity can immediately be shown in the case of interest to us here, that of the differentiation of pay for different skills from the moment there is a division of labor and an interdependence of different jobs, which is the case generally in modern industry. If, in a coal-fired locomotive, the train’s engineer is eliminated, one does not “reduce a little” of the product (transportation), one eliminates it completely; and the same thing is true if one eliminates the fireman. The “product” of this indivisible team of engineer and fireman obeys a law of all or nothing, and there is no “marginal product” of the one that can be separated from that of the other. The same thing goes on the shop floor, and ultimately for the modern factory as a whole, where jobs are closely interdependent.

For Marxist economics, on the other hand, wages are to be determined by the “law of labor value”; that is to say, they would in fact be equivalent to the cost of producing and reproducing this commodity that is, under capitalism,

labor power. Consequently, differences in wages between unskilled labor and skilled labor would have to correspond to the differences in training costs of these two categories (the main part of which is represented by the maintenance of future workers during their “unproductive” years of apprenticeship). It can easily be calculated that, on this basis, differences in pay could hardly exceed a 1:2 ratio (between labor absolutely devoid of all skill and that requiring ten or fifteen years of preparatory training). Now, in real life such differences greatly exceed that level, both in Western countries and in Eastern ones (where wage hierarchy is practically as overt as it is in the West).

We must emphasize, moreover, that, even if academic or Marxist theory offered an explanation of wage differentiations, they would in any case be unable to furnish a justification for them. For, in both cases, the existence of different skills is accepted, left undiscussed as a given beyond debate, whereas in fact it is only the result of the overall economic and social system and of its continued reproduction. If skilled labor is “worth” more, it would be, for example, in the Marxist view, because the family of this laborer has spent more for his training (and, theoretically, has to “recoup the costs”—which in practice signifies that the skilled worker will be able in his turn to finance the training of his children, etc.). Why, however, has this family been able to spend more—something that other families were not able to do? Because it was already privileged from the standpoint of income. All that these “explanations” say, therefore, strictly speaking, is that if a hierarchical differentiation exists at the outset, it will perpetuate itself by means of this mechanism.

In modern society, however, the hierarchical (or, what boils down to nearly the same thing, bureaucratic) system has become practically universal. As soon as there is any collective activity, it is organized according to the hierarchical principle, and the hierarchy of command and power coincides more and more with the hierarchy of wages and incomes. The result is that people almost never succeed in imagining that things could be otherwise, or that they themselves could be something definite except in terms of the place they occupy in the hierarchical pyramid.

Yet, we must also see how this hierarchy is recruited. A son of a rich person will be a rich person, a son of a manager [*cadre*] will have all the chances in the world to become a manager. Thus, in large part the strata occupying the higher levels of the hierarchical pyramid perpetuate themselves by heredity. And that does not occur by chance. A social system always tends to reproduce itself. If some social strata have privileges, the members thereof will do everything they can—and their privileges signify precisely that they are capable of doing so to a large extent—to transmit these privileges to their descendants. To the extent that, in such a system, these strata have need of “new men”—because the managerial apparatuses are expanding and proliferating—they

select, among the offspring of “lower” strata, those deemed most “apt” in order to co-opt them within their own strata. To this extent, it may appear that the “work” and the “abilities” of those who have been coopted have played a role in their career, and that their “merits” are being rewarded. Once again, however, “abilities” and “merits” here signify essentially the ability to adapt oneself to the reigning system, the better to serve it. From a self-managed society’s point of view, such abilities have no meaning.

Certainly, some people may think that, even in a self-managed society, the most courageous, the most tenacious, the most hardworking, the most “competent” individuals should have the right to a particular “reward,” *and* that this reward ought to be monetary. And this nourishes the illusion that there might be a justifiable hierarchy of wages.

This illusion does not resist examination. No more than in the present-day system does one see on what basis differences in pay could be founded logically and justified with figures to back them up. Why should this bit of competence be worth for its possessor four times as much income as that granted to another, and not twice or twelvefold? What sense is there in saying that the competency of a good surgeon is worth exactly as much as—or more, or less, than—that of a good engineer? And why is it not worth exactly as much as that of a good train engineer or a good teacher?

Once removed from a few very narrow domains, and stripped of general signification, there are no objective criteria for measuring and comparing the competencies, knowledge, and know-how of different individuals. And if society itself covers the cost for an individual to acquire such know-how—as is practically the case already today—it is unclear why the individual who has already benefited once from the privilege this acquisition constitutes in itself should benefit from it a second time under the form of a higher income. The same thing goes, moreover, for “merit” and “intelligence.” There are certainly individuals who are born more gifted than others as regards certain activities, or who become so. These differences are in general small, and the development of such differences especially depends on one’s family, social, and educational setting. But in any case, to the extent that someone has a “gift,” the exercise of this “gift” is in itself a source of pleasure when it is not hindered. And as for the rare individuals who are exceptionally gifted, what really matters is not monetary “reward” but creating what they are irresistibly driven to create. If Einstein had been interested in money, he would not have become Einstein—and it is likely that he would have made a rather mediocre boss or financier.

NOTE

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3.5 A Brief Rant against Work

With Particular Attention to the Relation of Work to White Supremacy, Sexism, and Miserabilism

PENELOPE ROSEMONT

The imaginary is that which tends to become real.

—André Breton, *Earthlight*

Daily life, a product of our own constant invention, exists riveted to a grid of time and superimposed on a dartboard labeled *Desire*. While bending backward over a bottomless abyss seething with consumer products, torrents of the dead past and credit debt dragging us ever downward, a luminous mirage of advertising offers its poisonous cup. Dart in hand, one pauses, perhaps to consider that obscure presence, the moment, and one's choices (now usually called "options," thanks to the all-pervasive penetration of market lingo). The "future" is a bought and sold commodity, but somehow it seems never to arrive. The consumer wanders lost and despondent in The Present—always The Present. From time to time a new Present arrives, but without any significant change. Frame after frame, like a sixteen-millimeter film, life clicks by. The Present Moment exists perpetually, speeded up; an illusion of movement is created, but real life remains elusive.

This eternal present, the stuff of which daily life is made, and to which we find ourselves bound, raises the question: how can we transform it? That is the problem facing us all: how to break the pattern of work—of week-to-week slavery, that habit of habits, that addiction of addictions—and how to detach ourselves from the grip of Self-Defeating Illusions for Sale, Inc. (a.k.a. the corporate consumer state). Especially ingrained is that pattern of working for someone else: making someone else's "goods," producing the wealth that someone else enjoys, thinking someone else's thoughts (sometimes actually believing them one's own), and even dreaming someone else's dreams—in short, living someone else's life, for one's own life, and one's own dream of life, have long since been lost in the shuffle. Such depersonalization and alienation from our deepest desires is implanted during childhood via school, church, movies, and TV and soon reaches the point where an individual's desire is not only a net of contradictions but also a commodity like all the others. "True life" always seems to be just a bit beyond what a weekly

paycheck and credit card can afford and is thus indefinitely postponed. And each postponement contributes to the reproduction of a social system that practically everyone who is not a multimillionaire or a masochist has come to loathe.

Freedom becomes possible only when the individual says, as Fenton Johnson put it in a 1914 poem:

I am tired of work
I am tired of building up somebody else's civilization.¹

The systematic suppression of a person's real desires—and that is largely what work consists of—is exacerbated by capitalism's incessant manipulation of artificial desires, “as advertised.” This gives daily life the character of a mass neurosis, with increasingly frequent psychotic episodes. To relieve the all-embracing boredom of daily life, society offers an endless array of distractions and stupefactions, most of them “available at a store near you.” The trouble is, these distractions and stupefactions, legal or illegal, soon become part of the boredom, for they satisfy no authentic desire.

When the news reports horrible crimes committed by children or teenagers trying to be satanists, or superheroes, or terrorists, or just “bad guys,” we can be sure that these kids lived lives of intolerable dullness, that they were so isolated from their own desires and from the larger society that they didn't even know how or where to look for something different, or how to rebel in such a way that it might actually make a difference. Instead, they picked up some trashy notions from Bible school, Hollywood, and TV that promised a few minutes of meaningless excitement followed by lots of publicity—also meaningless. Each time something like this happens we hear cries to monitor films more closely, and to ban violence on TV. Rarely, however, does anyone criticize the Bible or the Christian churches, despite the fact that Christianity—by far the bloodiest of the world's major religions—is far more to be blamed.

Similarly, one rarely hears criticism of war or the armed forces—a gang of professional killers whose influence on children cannot be anything other than baleful. And even less often does one encounter criticism of another intrinsically violent institution: the nuclear family; indeed, at this late date in human history, this relic of patriarchy is still held up as some sort of ideal. Replacing the extended family, the nuclear family as we know it today is an invention of the nineteenth century. Constructed by white bourgeois Europeans to meet the needs of expanding industrialization, it reflects capitalism's model of the chain of command. Christianity continues the sanction of male supremacy as a time-honored tradition dating back to a mandate of God,

no less, and reinforces the deadly superego politics that defines so much of Western civilization, particularly its “made in the USA” version, now rapidly overpowering the entire planet in the name of globalization.

All too rare are signs of the emancipatory “poetic politics” called for by James Baldwin in the 1960s, and recently renewed by David Roediger in his critique of the emptiness and brutality of so-called white culture.² A poetic politics—a politics based on the Pleasure Principle, as surrealists have always demanded—would seek to create a nonrepressive civilization; its program would naturally focus on freedom, equality, direct action, and improvisation. Capital’s war of each against all will grow worse, because each is increasingly at war with his or her own self. Self-hatred leads directly to hatred of the Other, which in turn perpetuates state violence and all forms of economic, racial, and gender oppression: in other words, superego politics.

As Anna Freud said, “What else is the superego than identification with the aggressor?”³ The world today is confronted by greater, more earth-shaking, more life-threatening problems than ever before: wars all over, massive pollution, global warming, the return of slavery, white supremacy, oppression of women, ecological disaster, neocolonialism, state terrorism, the prison industry, genocide, cancer, AIDS, the traffic death toll, xenophobia, pesticides, genetic engineering—the list goes on and on.

Ceaselessly bombarded by news reports and sound bites of one catastrophe after another, most people have no idea what to do and lapse into paralysis. On the ideological front, this widespread passivity, itself a major social problem, is maintained by what André Breton called miserabilism, the cynical rationalization of misery, suffering, and corruption: the dominant ideology of power in our time.⁴ Every hour, moreover, countless billions are spent on propaganda, advertising, and other mystifications to sustain the delusion that the crisis-strewn society we live in today is the best and only one possible.

It is important to grasp that work is at the center of these problems. It is work that keeps the whole miserabilist system going. Without work, the death-dealing juggernaut that proclaims itself the free market would grind to a halt. (“Free market” means freedom for capital, and unfreedom for those who work.)

With very rare exceptions, jobs today are devoid of real meaning. The huge majority provide junk or so-called services that people don’t need and that are destroying the planet we live on. In other words, most work today has nothing to do with fulfilling human needs and desires; it is simply work to support the capitalist system. The widely broadcast trade-off between jobs and environment shows how deadly the free market is. The city offers people jobs tearing down their own homes, causing rents to skyrocket; the

countryside offers them jobs building roads, dams, malls, or airports that displace the local population and destroy what little remains of the natural world. Building new prisons creates new jobs locking up and brutalizing other (unemployed) workers, while factories open up new opportunities for workers to poison themselves, their children, and their community for generations to come.

In a world too busy to live, work itself has become toxic, a form of “digging your own grave.” Certain sectors of the population experience work differently from others. For many upper- and middle-class women, work outside the home is often experienced as a kind of liberation; it brings a feeling of independence, financial as well as sexual, and ultimately stimulates a wider awareness and new desires. Most working-class women, however—black and white—find work an added burden, because child care, housework, and other family chores are always waiting for them when they arrive home from the job. For them, work suppresses rather than stimulates awareness.

Work is a curse, but in the pixilated social order we live in, having no work can be even worse. In a society of inconceivable wealth and abundance, a large part of the populace lives way below the poverty line. Capital flight has destroyed the lives of millions of working people and created a new generation of ghost towns. Mass layoffs bring about a situation in which all of one’s time is taken up with the struggle for bare survival. Joblessness easily becomes homelessness and hopelessness, and the so-called surplus labor force becomes a real problem for law and order. And what is capitalism’s solution? New privatized prisons.

Immigrant workers, especially so-called illegal aliens—Mexicans, Chinese, and others—often find themselves in sweatshop conditions: working the longest hours doing the hardest work for the lowest pay. Work plays an all-consuming role in their lives, because just to pay for food and rent is an uphill battle. Those who have worked a lifetime, or twenty years, or even ten years, tend to defend the necessity and value—even the “moral” value!—of work. For many, having worked a long time seems to validate it. It places work in a realm beyond questioning—makes it seem part of the natural order of things, when in truth it should be thought of as unnatural, a collective crime against humankind and the Earth.

Once upon a time people defined themselves by their occupations or jobs. This is less and less the case today as the nature of jobs changes; relatively few today think of themselves as having an occupation. In my own career I have been a microbiologist, a fats-and-oils chemist, a die cutter in a picture-frame factory, an editor of medical books, a proofreader for *Playboy* and the *Law Bulletin*, an insurance clerk, a bill payer for radiologists, an export/import clerk for a cookie company, a bookstore worker, a quality-control supervi-

sor for a pharmaceutical supplier, a motion-picture film printer, a jelly-bean inspector—and lots more. I have always been part of the working class, but I have never seen any point in defining myself by any of these jobs.

We are increasingly forced to define ourselves according to what we consume. A large part of the population proudly display brand names on their clothes and cars. Land of the free (free advertising, that is)! However, we have the potentiality of defining ourselves through our dreams, our desires—our creative imaginations. Here again we are increasingly forced to make this choice, out of necessity. For as the job market shrinks, as the managers of miserabilism manage to make the existing misery even more miserable, many people will have nothing left except their dreams and imagination.

Here we are between the emergency exit of a closing bank and the ambulance entrance of an aging nuclear reactor waiting for the economic recovery of dreams, and that's what's happening—that is how Jayne Cortez describes “a current event news release.”⁵ For too many, however, the leisure to dream comes too late. Retirees and workers who are suddenly laid off and unable to find other jobs are frequently tormented by anxiety, self-doubt, and depression.

The psychopathology of the so-called work ethic, which has long since become a work obsession—that is, a recognizable illness—needs more critical study. Most therapists, of course, accept work as normal. As Paul Garon argued in “Love of Work and the Fear of Play,” such apologetics for misery are only to be expected of those whose aim is to help patients “adjust” to a sick society.⁶ Open criticism of work, reduction of working hours, and defense of the right to be lazy are in any case not encouraged—either in school, or in the press (including the trade union press), or on TV talk shows, or in more intellectual forums. The demand is for “more jobs!”

Marx himself, of course, was radically opposed to such system-perpetuating boosterism. As early as 1845 he wrote, “‘Work’ is essentially the unfree, inhuman, unsocial activity, determined by private property and creating private property. The abolition of private property becomes a reality only when it is understood as the abolition of ‘work.’”⁷

The question is: Why have so many people allowed themselves to become, in effect, the manufacturers of their own misery? Why do so many work so long and so hard to create so much profit for so few? Why do so many people work when it's demonstrably bad for them, their communities, and the whole Earth? Christianity and its churches are an important factor here, for it was the Christian contempt for the human body and for life on Earth that made wage slavery possible. Moreover, by preaching submission and goodwill to the workers but always siding with the ruling elite, Christianity provided a model of hypocritical righteousness that capitalism, itself the

most sanctimonious of frauds, has always found well suited to its exploitative needs.

Christianity remains a pernicious and reactionary force, but the secularization of society has pushed it onto the sidelines. The main ideological props of wage slavery today are male supremacy and white supremacy, the deadliest enemies of human freedom. They are often allied with Christianity, and their influence is far more pervasive. Indeed, these degraded, exclusionary notions permeate every value and institution of this society and are preponderant elements in that garbage dump of repressive ideologies known as miserabilism. In essence, the myth of the happy worker is the myth of the white male. I have referred to male supremacy in connection with the nuclear family, but the oppression of women is a woeful reality not only in the family but also in the workplace, in the classroom, in social and political life, in the sciences, in the arts, and in the street. More than 150 years after the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, women in the United States are still denied full equality and routinely subjected to every sort of discrimination and abuse. Long hours, low pay, and poor conditions are still the "reward" of the great majority of female wage earners.

Even more fatal in its everyday consequences is the ridiculous belief in whiteness—that is, in the arbitrary privileges shared by those who identify themselves with the exclusive club that calls itself the "white race." Although no such thing as a white race exists (biologically and ethnologically, the notion is entirely groundless), the delusion of white supremacy inevitably leads to massive harm and horror, as the history of the United States, Nazi Germany, and apartheid South Africa shows only too well. Basically a means of repressing and terrorizing people of color, the mystique of whiteness is also reflected in the monotonous pseudopolitics, bureaucratic heartlessness, and lack of imagination characteristic of a depressingly large portion of the U.S. population. These are the ideologies that obstruct open discussion of work and especially of abolishing work. They are closely related: white supremacists, female as well as male, are also male supremacists, and both glorify work for work's sake as well as violence for violence's sake. They all regard work as manly, or even a strictly masculine prerogative, and racists have long suffered from the delusion that African Americans, Latinos, and Asians are "lazy."

Whiteness, as David Roediger points out in his *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness*, "is used to make whites settle for hopelessness in politics and misery in everyday life."⁸ I would suggest that male supremacy exerts a comparably debilitating influence. Historically, these two supremacist dogmas have immeasurably damaged the movement to abolish the wage system and have done more to set it back than any other factor. Sexism and whiteness deflected the revolutionary cause from its universal aim, fragmented its emancipatory

vision, and above all corrupted its entire sense of purpose. The struggle for workers' self-emancipation was blocked because the self was divided.

The emphasis on liberation, cultural diversity, a radical break with the system of domination, and the critique of technology, daily life, sexuality, language, and our relation with nature and other species have shifted the paradigm of social transformation from a much too self-limiting focus on labor. And in doing so, they have broadened the horizons of everyone who seriously desires and seeks revolutionary change. Far from dividing or destroying any genuine radicalism, these currents are giving radicalism a fresh start. However confused some of them of may be, they are the bold voices of something new and audacious. And to paraphrase the pioneering African American feminist Anna Julia Cooper, the world needs to hear these voices.

The endless mass of junk that late capitalism imposes on us, obnoxious and worthless as it is, nonetheless reveals a remarkable human ingenuity and highly developed coordination and cooperation, an immense amount of individual and collective effort. The irony is that all this ingenuity and toil has gone into making our society a hell, when with much less trouble and infinitely more pleasure we could easily have created a paradise instead. Society today has the capacity through technology to reduce work to a tiny fraction of what it is, while continuing to meet all human needs. It is obvious that if people really want paradise on Earth, they can have it—practically overnight. Of course, they will have to overcome the immense and multinational “false consciousness” industry, which works very hard to make sure that very few working people know what they really want. Our struggle calls for labor organizers of a new kind. To bring about the meltdown of miserabilism we need awakeners of latent desires, fomenters of marvelous humor, stimulators of ardent dreams, and provokers of the deepest possible yearning for a life of poetic adventure.

We also need to expand and refine our methods of inquiry, criticism, and making discoveries. Dialectics—“the power of negative thinking,” as Herbert Marcuse called it⁹—needs to be complemented by the science of analogy, which Charles Fourier regarded as the most effective means of dissipating our political prejudices as well as our moral ones.¹⁰ According to Nora Mitrani, one of surrealism's most brilliant theorists, analogy is the vital element that makes poetry a scandalously revolutionary “Science of Relationships.”¹¹ Inasmuch as social transformation and human emancipation are fundamentally about overturning old constraining relationships and developing new nonexploitive relationships, this poetic science should be explored by everyone who is active in the struggle for freedom. Humankind has truly arrived at a major historic crossroads. Either we collectively find our way out of this hall of mirrors, overcome our alienation and atomization, and create

a nonrepressive society in which each and every individual can be true to himself or herself, or we continue pell-mell on the ignominious business-as-usual course of greedy self-deception, making throwaway commodities of ourselves, making life more and more miserable for everyone, and ultimately making the Earth itself unlivable.

NOTES

1. Fenton Johnson, "Tired," in *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, ed. James Weldon Johnson (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1950), 144.

2. Editors' note: See, for example, James Baldwin, *Collected Essays*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1998); and David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1999). David Roediger's newest book is also relevant here: *Class, Race, and Marxism* (London: Verso, 2017).

3. Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *Impious Fidelity: Anna Freud, Psychoanalysis, Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 193.

4. Editor's note: Breton wrote about miserabilism in various ways throughout his writings. For extensive discussion and sources, see Penelope Rosemont, *Surrealist Experiences: 1001 Dawns, 221 Midnights* (Chicago: Black Swan Press, 2000).

5. Quoted in *ibid.*, 171.

6. Paul Garon, "Love of Work and the Fear of Play," *Arsenal*, no. 3 (1976): 28–31.

7. Nicholas Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003), 65.

8. David Roediger, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness: Essays on Race, Politics, and Working Class History* (London: Verso Books, 1994), 16.

9. Editors' note: This refers to a discussion about negative thinking in Herbert Marcuse's essay "A Note on Dialectics," which was published as the preface to the second edition of his 1941 book, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), vii–xvi.

10. See Charles Fourier, "Indices and Methods Which Led to the Discovery," in *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier: Selected Texts on Work, Love, and Passionate Attraction*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Beecher and Richard Bienvenu (Boston: Beacon, 1971), 93–102.

11. Nora Mitrani, "Scandal with a Secret Face," in *Surrealist Women*, ed. Penelope Rosemont (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 229.

4 | Racialization and Feminist Critique

A wonderful time—the War:
when money rolled in
and blood rolled out.
But blood
was far away
from here—
Money was near.
—Langston Hughes, “Green Memory”

For the property-owning bourgeois woman, her house is the world. *For the proletarian woman, the whole world is her house*, the world with its sorrow and joy, with its cold cruelty and its raw size. . . . Proletarian women, the poorest of the poor, the most disempowered of the disempowered, hurry to join the struggle for the emancipation of women and of humankind from the horrors of capitalist domination!

—Rosa Luxemburg, speech for Proletarian Women’s Day, 1914

Black men and women who refuse to live under oppression are dangerous to white society because they become symbols of hope to their brothers and sisters, inspiring them to follow their example.

—Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*

4.1 The Lived Experience of the Black Man

FRANTZ FANON

“Dirty nigger!” or simply “Look! A Negro!”
I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to *be* at the origin of the world, and here I am an object among other objects.

Locked in this suffocating reification, I appealed to the Other so that his liberating gaze, gliding over my body suddenly smoothed of rough edges, would give *me* back the lightness of being I thought I had lost, and taking *me* out of the world put *me* back in the world. But just as I get to the other slope I stumble, and the Other *fixes me* with his gaze, his gestures and attitude,

the same way you fix a preparation with a dye. I lose my temper, demand an explanation. Nothing doing. I explode. *Here* are the fragments put together by another *me*.

As long as the black man remains on his home territory, except for petty internal quarrels, he will not have to experience his being for others. There is in fact a “being for other,” as described by [G.W.F.] Hegel, but any ontology is made impossible in a colonized and acculturated society. Apparently, those who have written on the subject have not taken this sufficiently into consideration. In the *weltanschauung* of a colonized people, there is an impurity or a flaw that prohibits any ontological explanation. Perhaps it could be argued that this is true for any individual, but such an argument would be concealing the basic problem. Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man, since it ignores the lived experience. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some people will argue that the situation has a double meaning. Not at all. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. From one day to the next, the blacks have had to deal with two systems of reference. Their metaphysics, or less pretentiously their customs and the agencies to which they refer, were abolished because they were in contradiction with a new civilization that imposed its own.

In the twentieth century the black man on his home territory is oblivious of the moment when his inferiority is determined by the Other. Naturally, we have had the opportunity to discuss the black problem with friends and, less often, with African Americans. Together we proclaimed loud and clear the equality of man in the world. In the Antilles there is also that minor tension between the cliques of white Creoles, mulattoes, and blacks. But we were content to intellectualize these differences. In fact, there was nothing dramatic about them. And then . . .

And then we were given the occasion to confront the white gaze. An unusual weight descended on us. The real world robbed us of our share. In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of one’s body is solely negating. It’s an image in the third person. All around the body reigns an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. I know that if I want to smoke, I shall have to stretch out my right arm and grab the pack of cigarettes lying at the other end of the table. As for the matches, they are in the left drawer, and I shall have to move back a little. And I make all these moves, not out of habit, but by implicit knowledge. A slow construction of my self as a body in a spatial and temporal world—such seems to be the schema. It is not imposed on me; it is rather a definitive structuring of my self and the world—definitive because it creates a genuine dialectic between my body and the world.

For some years now, certain laboratories have been researching for a “denegrification” serum. In all seriousness they have been rinsing out their test tubes and adjusting their scales and have begun research on how the wretched black man could whiten himself and thus rid himself of the burden of this bodily curse. Beneath the body schema I had created a historical-racial schema. The data I used were provided not by “remnants of feelings and notions of the tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic, or visual nature”¹ but by the Other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories. I thought I was being asked to construct a physiological self, to balance space and localize sensations, when all the time they were clamoring for more.

“Look! A Negro!” It was a passing sting. I attempted a smile.

“Look! A Negro!” Absolutely. I was beginning to enjoy myself.

“Look! A Negro!” The circle was gradually getting smaller. I was really enjoying myself.

“*Maman*, look, a Negro; I’m scared!” Scared! Scared! Now they were beginning to be scared of me. I wanted to kill myself laughing, but laughter had become out of the question.

I couldn’t take it any longer, for I already knew there were legends, stories, history, and especially the *historicity* that [Karl] Jaspers had taught me. As a result, the body schema, attacked in several places, collapsed, giving way to an epidermal racial schema. In the train, it was a question of being aware of my body, no longer in the third person but in triple. In the train, instead of one seat, they left me two or three. I was no longer enjoying myself. I was unable to discover the feverish coordinates of the world. I existed in triple: I was taking up room. I approached the Other, and the Other, evasive, hostile, but not opaque, transparent and absent, vanished. Nausea.

I was responsible not only for my body but also for my race and my ancestors. I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, and above all, yes, above all, the grinning *Y a bon Banania*.

Disoriented, incapable of confronting the Other, the white man, who had no scruples about imprisoning me, I transported myself on that particular day far, very far, from my self, and gave myself up as an object. What did this mean to me? Peeling, stripping my skin, causing a hemorrhage that left congealed black blood all over my body. Yet this reconsideration of myself, this thematization, was not my idea. I wanted quite simply to be a man among men. I would have liked to enter our world young and sleek, a world we could build together.

I refused, however, any affective tetanization. I wanted to be a man, and nothing but a man. There were some who wanted to equate me with

my ancestors, enslaved and lynched: I decided that I would accept this. I considered this internal kinship from the universal level of the intellect—I was the grandson of slaves the same way President [Albert François] Lebrun was the grandson of peasants who had been exploited and worked to the bone.

The alert was soon over, in fact.

In the United States, blacks are segregated. In South America, they are whipped in the streets, and black strikers are gunned down. In West Africa, the black man is a beast of burden. And just beside me there is this student colleague of mine from Algeria who tells me, “As long as the Arab is treated like a man, like one of us, there will be no viable answer.”

“You see, my dear fellow, color prejudice is totally foreign to me.” “But do come in, old chap, you won’t find any color prejudice here.” “Quite so, the black is just as much a man as we are.” “It’s not because he’s black that he’s less intelligent than we are.” “I had a Senegalese colleague in the regiment, very smart guy.”

Where do I fit in? Or, if you like, where should I stick myself?

“Martinican, a native from one of our ‘old’ colonies.”

Where should I hide?

“Look, a Negro! *Maman*, a Negro!”

“Ssh! You’ll make him angry. Don’t pay attention to him, monsieur; he doesn’t realize you’re just as civilized as we are.”

My body was returned to me spread-eagled, disjointed, redone, draped in mourning on this white winter’s day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is wicked, the Negro is ugly; look, a Negro; the Negro is trembling, the Negro is trembling because he’s cold, the small boy is trembling because he’s afraid of the Negro, the Negro is trembling with cold, the cold that chills the bones, the lovely little boy is trembling because he thinks the Negro is trembling with rage, the little white boy runs to his mother’s arms: “*Maman*, the Negro’s going to eat me.”

The white man is all around me; up above the sky is tearing at its navel; the earth crunches under my feet and sings white, white. All this whiteness bums me to a cinder.

I sit down next to the fire and discover my livery for the first time. It is in fact ugly. I won’t go on because who can tell me what beauty is?

Where should I put myself from now on? I can feel that familiar rush of blood surge up from the numerous dispersions of my being. I am about to lose my temper. The fire had died a long time ago, and once again the Negro is trembling.

“Look how handsome that Negro is.”

“The handsome Negro says, ‘Fuck you,’ madame.”

Her face colored with shame. At last I was freed from my rumination. I realized two things at once: I had identified the enemy and created a scandal. Overjoyed. We could now have some fun.

The battlefield had been drawn up; I could enter the lists.

I don't believe it! Whereas I was prepared to forget, to forgive, and to love, my message was flung back at me like a slap in the face. The white world, the only decent one, was preventing me from participating. It demanded that a man behave like a man. It demanded of me that I behave like a black man—or at least like a Negro. I hailed the world, and the world amputated my enthusiasm. I was expected to stay in line and make myself scarce.

I'll show them! They can't say I didn't warn them. Slavery? No longer a subject of discussion, just a bad memory. My so-called inferiority? A hoax that it would be better to laugh about. I was prepared to forget everything, provided the world integrated me. My incisors were ready to go into action. I could feel them, sharp. And then . . .

I don't believe it! Whereas I had every reason to vent my hatred and loathing, they were rejecting me? Whereas I was the one they should have begged and implored, I was denied the slightest recognition? I made up my mind, since it was impossible to rid myself of an *innate complex*, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN. Since the Other was reluctant to recognize me, there was only one answer: to make myself known.

In *Anti-Semite and Jew* [Jean-Paul] Sartre writes: "They [the Jews] have allowed themselves to be poisoned by the stereotype that others have of them, and they live in fear that their acts will correspond to this stereotype. . . . We may say that their conduct is perpetually overdetermined from the inside."²

The Jewishness of the Jew, however, can go unnoticed. He is not integrally what he is. We can but hope and wait. His acts and behavior are the determining factor. He is a white man, and apart from some debatable features, he can pass undetected. He belongs to the race that has never practiced cannibalism. What a strange idea, to eat one's father! Serves them right; they shouldn't be black. Of course the Jews have been tormented—what am I saying? They have been hunted, exterminated, and cremated, but these are just minor episodes in the family history. The Jew is not liked as soon as he has been detected. But with me things take on a *new* face. I'm not given a second chance. I am overdetermined from the outside. I am a slave not to the "idea" others have of me, but to my appearance. I arrive slowly in the world; sudden emergencies are no longer my habit. I crawl along. The white gaze, the only valid one, is already dissecting me. I am *fixed*. Once their microtomes are sharpened, the whites objectively cut sections of my reality. I have been betrayed. I sense, I see in this white gaze that it's the arrival not of a new man, but of a new type of man, a new species. A Negro, in fact!

I slip into corners, my long antenna encountering the various axioms on the surface of things: the Negro's clothes smell of Negro; the Negro has white teeth; the Negro has big feet; the Negro has a broad chest. I slip into corners; I keep silent; all I want is to be anonymous, to be forgotten. Look, I'll agree to everything, on condition I go unnoticed!

"Hey, I'd like you to meet my black friend. . . . Aime Cesaire, a black *agrégé* from the Sorbonne. . . . Marian Anderson, the greatest black singer. . . . Dr. Cobb, who discovered white blood cells, is black. . . . Hey, say hello to my friend from Martinique (be careful, he's very touchy)."

Shame. Shame and self-contempt. Nausea. When they like me, they tell me my color has nothing to do with it. When they hate me, they add that it's not because of my color. Either way, I am a prisoner of the vicious circle.

I turn away from these prophets of doom and cling to my brothers, Negroes like myself. To my horror, they reject me. They are almost white. And then they'll probably marry a white woman and have slightly brown children. Who knows, gradually, perhaps. . . .

I was dreaming.

"You must understand that I am one of Lyon's biggest fans of black people."

The proof was there, implacable. My blackness was there, dense and undeniable. And it tormented me, pursued me, made me uneasy, and exasperated me.

Negroes are savages, morons, and illiterates. But I knew personally that in my case these assertions were wrong. There was this myth of the Negro that had to be destroyed at all costs. We were no longer living in an age when people marveled at a black priest. We had doctors, teachers, and statesmen. Okay, but there was always something unusual about them. "We have a Senegalese history teacher. He's very intelligent. . . . Our physician's black. He's very gentle." Here was the Negro teacher, the Negro physician; as for me, I was becoming a nervous wreck, shaking at the slightest alert. I knew for instance that if the physician made one false move, it was over for him and for all those who came after him. What, in fact, could one expect from a Negro physician? As long as everything was going smoothly, he was praised to the heavens; but watch out—there was no room whatsoever for any mistake. The black physician will never know how close he is to being discredited. I repeat, I was walled in: neither my refined manners nor my literary knowledge nor my understanding of the quantum theory could find favor.

The Jew and I: not satisfied with racializing myself, by a happy stroke of fate, I was turning more human. I was drawing closer to the Jew, my brother in misfortune.

Disgraceful!

At first glance it might seem strange that the attitude of the anti-Semite can be equated with that of the negrophobe. It was my philosophy teacher from the Antilles who reminded me one day: “When you hear someone insulting the Jews, pay attention; he is talking about you.” And I believed at the time he was universally right, meaning that I was responsible in my body and soul for the fate reserved for my brother. Since then, I have understood that what he meant quite simply was that the anti-Semite is inevitably a negrophobe.

“You have come too late, much too late. There will always be a world—a white world—between you and us: that impossibility on either side to obliterate the past once and for all.” Understandably, confronted with this affective ankylosis of the white man, I finally made up my mind to shout my blackness. Gradually, putting out pseudopodia in all directions, I secreted a race.

I put the white man back in his place; emboldened, I jostled him and hurled in his face: accommodate me as I am; I’m not accommodating anyone. I snickered to my heart’s delight. The white man was visibly growling. His reaction was a long time coming. I had won. I was overjoyed.

“Lay aside your history, your research into the past, and try to get in step with our rhythm. In a society such as ours, industrialized to the extreme, dominated by science, there is no longer room for your sensitivity. You have to be tough to be able to live. It is no longer enough to play ball with the world; you have to master it with integrals and atoms. Of course, they will tell me, from time to time when we are tired of all that concrete, *we* will turn to you as our children, our naïve, ingenuous, and spontaneous children. We will turn to you as the childhood of the world. You are so authentic in your life, so playful. Let us forget for a few moments our formal, polite civilization and bend down over those heads, those adorable expressive faces. In a sense, you reconcile us with ourselves.”

So they were countering my irrationality with rationality, my rationality with the “true rationality.” I couldn’t hope to win. I tested my heredity. I did a complete checkup of my sickness. I wanted to be typically black—that was out of the question. I wanted to be white—that was a joke. And when I tried to claim my negritude intellectually as a concept, they snatched it away from me.

From time to time you feel like giving up. Expressing the real is an arduous job. But when you take it into your head to express existence, you will very likely encounter nothing but the nonexistent. What is certain is that at the very moment when I endeavored to grasp my being, Sartre, who remains “the Other,” by naming me shattered my last illusion. I, in a paroxysm of experience and rage, was proclaiming this; he reminded me that my negritude was nothing but a weak stage. Truthfully, I’m telling you, I no longer felt the caress of the ground. Without a black past, without a black future, it was

impossible for me to live my blackness. Not yet white, no longer completely black, I was damned. Jean-Paul Sartre forgets that the black man suffers in his body quite differently from the white man.³

Between the white man and me there is irremediably a relationship of transcendence.⁴ But we have forgotten my constancy in love. I define myself as absolutely and sustainedly open-minded. And I take this negritude and with tears in my eyes I piece together the mechanism. That which had been shattered is rebuilt and constructed by the intuitive lianas of my hands. My shout rings out more violently: I am a nigger, I am a nigger, I am a nigger.

A feeling of inferiority? No, a feeling of not existing. Sin is black as virtue is white. All those white men, fingering their guns, can't be wrong. I am guilty. I don't know what of, but I know I'm a wretch.

NOTES

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1. Jean Lhermitte, *L'image de notre corps* (Paris: Editions de la Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1939), 17.

2. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate* (New York: Schocken, 1995), 95.

3. Though Sartre's speculations on the existence of "the Other" remain correct (insofar as, we may recall, *Being and Nothingness* describes an alienated consciousness), their application to a black consciousness proves fallacious because the white man is not only "the Other" but also the master, whether real or imaginary.

4. In the sense meant by Jean Wahl, *Existence humaine et transcendence* (Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Editions de la Baconnière, 1944).

4.2 The Negro's Fight

Negroes, We Can Depend Only on Ourselves!

C.L.R. JAMES

The worst traitors and enemies are always the traitors and enemies inside the camp. Today at the head of the traitors is Philip Randolph with his two assistants, Walter White of the NAACP and Frank Crosswaith of the Socialist Party. But Randolph and White are the chiefs. They are responsible for the calling off of the March on Washington. They did [Franklin] Roosevelt's dirty work. They did what Roosevelt could not have done himself. Randolph bears the responsibility, but White of the NAACP is smeared all over with evidence of his partnership in the crime. Let us therefore have a few words

about White. He is a big shot in the NAACP and for years we have pointed out that the leadership of the NAACP is rotten, that though it may investigate lynchings, etc., and carry on a certain amount of public agitation, yet it is not an organization which depends on the action of the masses but begs for favors and carries on intrigues with Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt. It is far more concerned with its back-stairs connections with the White House than with mobilizing mass action. It will go a little way with the masses of Negroes when the masses move, but as soon as the mass movement begins to look as if it means business, the NAACP begins to think of what Roosevelt will say. And in any serious clash between the masses of Negro people and the government, the NAACP is with the government. Now all through the negotiations Walter White was Randolph's chief friend and adviser.

Yet Randolph was the man in front. Why? Chiefly because Randolph had a great reputation as a labor leader. Randolph had organized the Pullman porters, the best labor organization that Negroes have today. The struggles of Negroes are first and foremost labor struggles, particularly the struggle for jobs in the war industries. So everybody looked to Randolph.

WHY THEY STARTED THE MOVEMENT

Why did they start the movement at all? The Negroes were clamoring for action. All over the country there was the usual unrest and dissatisfaction, but this time linked with the desire for action. White and Randolph saw that if they did not take the leadership of the movement, the Stalinists, using their stooge organization, the National Negro Congress, would take it over. At that time (not today any longer) the Stalinists were calling the war an imperialist war and were doing all they could to confuse and embarrass the Roosevelt government. So that if they let the Stalinists get away with the leadership, White and Randolph would be discredited, a mass Negro movement would get under way and leave them behind; and Negroes would be under Stalinist influence. White and Randolph therefore came out as leaders.

Roosevelt, however, didn't want any March on Washington. What the ruling class hates above all is independent mass action. Above all, the workers must always be told what to do. They must never do anything themselves. And particularly Negroes. This march would have meant a tremendous awakening of Negroes all over the country. It would have shown the hypocrisy of the American capitalist class, pretending that it was fighting for democracy abroad, when it was stamping as usual on the democratic rights of the poor at home, [so] Roosevelt set out to break the march.

On June 10 Eleanor Roosevelt wrote a letter to Randolph. She called the march a "very grave mistake." Following this, Eleanor Roosevelt, [Fiorello]

LaGuardia, Randolph, and White had a conference at City Hall in New York. White and Randolph were now in a mess.

[Henry] Stimson, Secretary of War, and [Frank] Knox, Secretary of the Navy, sent a telegram to Randolph asking him to come to Washington for a conference. There was a lot of going and coming and in the end Roosevelt issued his executive order, which does not mean one damn thing because there are no penalties to be imposed on those who continue to discriminate against Negroes. But White and Randolph have done their work. They have killed the greatest independent action the Negroes have undertaken for a generation.

STORY NOT YET FINISHED

The story isn't finished yet, however, and it isn't going to be finished for a long time. Here are two new chapters, very short but very significant: Randolph got on the radio a few days ago and said that soon the president would issue another executive order abolishing discrimination in the Army and Navy for all time. This can mean only one thing. Somebody has promised Randolph a job in government, for no man in his senses would talk such nonsense, except he was doing it for a purpose.

At the same time Glenn L. Martin, whose airplane plant at Middle River, Maryland, has half a billion dollars' worth of war contracts, was asked what his [response] would be if the president tried to enforce the executive order. He replied: "Immediate stoppage of work." In other words, "To hell with the president."

Negroes, that is what we have to deal with. Negro-hating capitalists, sly politicians like Roosevelt, and treacherous stooges like White and Randolph. We must organize ourselves, with our own elected committees and depend only on ourselves.

NOTE

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4.3 Harlem Negroes Protest Jim Crow Discrimination

C.L.R. JAMES

"Shame has come to our city and sorrow to the large number of our fellow citizens, decent, law-abiding citizens, who live in the Harlem section."

Thus the first citizen of New York describes the demonstration in Harlem of the Negro people which has resulted in half a dozen deaths, scores of wounded, and hundreds of arrests.

So that, according to Mayor LaGuardia, when the Negro people demonstrate, shame comes to the citizens. Shame did come to LaGuardia himself when he insulted the Negro people by signing the contract for the Metropolitan Insurance Company housing project which expressly stipulated the exclusion of Negroes.

Shame does not come to the decent, law-abiding citizens in the White House in Washington and the decent, law-abiding citizens in Congress who have insulted the Negro people by segregating them in the federal government, by segregating them in the Army, in the Navy, in the Air Force, and in women's auxiliaries.

Shame does not come to Secretary of War Stimson and Secretary of the Navy Knox when the men they have inducted into the Army and Navy are shot down by military police and Southern civilians, are Jim Crowed and ill-treated on their way to the camps, are segregated in the camps themselves, persecuted, maltreated, and lynched without any protection from the government.

We have not seen shame in the industrialists and men of business who in the very City of New York will not employ Negroes, and only when they are compelled to and have no other means of evasion, grudgingly give them work in industry, that same industry which is supposed to be doing all that is possible to win the great "war for democracy."

All these things can be done by the "decent, law-abiding citizens" who merely continue the three-hundred-year-old persecution of the Negro people which has always characterized American capitalist society.

But when the Negroes in Harlem become exasperated to the utmost limit by the combined persecution and hypocrisy of their lords and masters, and decide that they will show their resentment in the only way that seems possible to them, then is the time when LaGuardia goes to the microphone and informs the public that this indeed is a shame.

This, and not the persecution, is the scandal. This, and not the hypocrisy, is the disgrace. Not those who insult the Negro people, not those who insult the intelligence of the Negroes by the perpetual bawling and yelling to them about the "war for democracy."

No! According to LaGuardia, the demonstration against these things, that is the shame.

WHAT KIND OF DEMONSTRATION WAS IT?

The mayor himself has informed the public that the upheaval in Harlem was a demonstration. A demonstration against what? Since when is it shameful to demonstrate against lynch law, segregation, discrimination, and hypocrisy

in high places, masquerading before the people as “war for democracy”? In this truly shameful hypocrisy, LaGuardia is only one of many. All the press, all the worthy citizens, not only in New York, but in Detroit, in Mobile, in Beaumont, and in San Francisco, all get together and in one loud, clear, and mournful voice shake their heads and say to the protesting Negro people, “What a shame!”

The people in Harlem are exasperated beyond endurance by the situation of the Negro people in the United States as a whole and the continuous contradiction between being persecuted by democracy and then being told that they must die for that democracy.

But the Harlem people have certain special grievances of their own. The overcrowding in Harlem can be borne with patience and forbearance by those who read about it in the newspapers. The people of Harlem can no longer endure it. They can no longer bear the overcharging for inferior food which is dumped on the Harlem community by the “decent, law-abiding citizens” who cannot dispose of these goods anywhere else.

The people of Harlem cannot reconcile at all the constant shrieking in the press about the manpower shortage and their inability to get work. All this seems to the people of Harlem particularly shameful. When they do get work in industry, it is more often in New Jersey than in New York.

The people of Harlem for months now have made all manner of protest against the savage brutality of the police under the command of that “decent, law-abiding citizen,” Police Commissioner Valentine, under the patronage of that equally “decent” and equally “law-abiding” citizen, Mayor LaGuardia.

At a meeting of the New York City Council on June 25, Councilman A. Clayton Powell said that New York had recently witnessed “a continuous succession of unwarranted brutalities perpetrated upon Negro citizens in our city.” Many of these, said Powell, had resulted in deaths. He said that he had taken up each of these cases by mail with Police Commissioner [Lewis] Valentine. One letter had been acknowledged. The rest had been ignored.

“I now say, fellow councilmen,” continued Powell, “that the riots of Detroit can easily be duplicated here in New York City. If any riots break out here in New York, the blood of innocent people, white and Negro, will rest upon the hands of Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and Police Commissioner Valentine, who have refused to see representative citizens to discuss means of combating outbreaks in New York.”

The Negro people in Harlem on Sunday and Monday knew what they were demonstrating against. They were making known their feelings to the government in Washington, which continually calls on them to fight for democracy and at the same time sits quietly while the worst indignities are committed against them in the name of democracy.

For them this question of the government in Washington is symbolized in the Army and the treatment of Negroes there.

The Negro people were protesting against conditions in New York City and the conduct of the police force described by Powell.

The Negro people were demonstrating against the exorbitant prices which every shop in Harlem thinks itself justified in charging them.

WHAT BROUGHT THE PROTEST?

For several months the police department has maintained a twenty-four-hour picket in the lobby of the Hotel Braddock, the second-largest hotel in Harlem. The Negroes say, they have said it in the Negro press, that they know many places in downtown Manhattan where, as far as they can judge, a permanent picket is very much needed. Harlem is very much stirred by this official slander of the Negro people.

When Private [Robert] Bandy stopped a cop from rough-handling a Negro woman in the Braddock Hotel, it was no accidental incident. It represented to every Harlemiter who heard it merely another example of the especially malignant persecution and slander which the Harlem people have been suffering during recent months. And when on top of it, the cop shot the Negro soldier, is it any wonder that the rumor spread and the Harlem people decided that they would show in no uncertain terms that they were not going to put up any longer with the continuous provocation of the “decent, law-abiding” officials who rule them.

The crowds heard that Bandy had died. It didn't matter whether he was dead or not. Bandy was a symbol.

Crowds of Negro service men and civilians milled around the hospital where Bandy and Officer [James] Collins who shot him were being hospitalized.

WAS IT A “RACE RIOT”?

It is perfectly clear that the masses of the Negro people in Harlem, far from being thoughtless hoodlums, to quote Mayor LaGuardia again, were people stirred to resentment and action at the insult which they felt had been directed at the whole Negro race in the treatment of the Negro soldiers.

We do not propose to go here into any detailed account of the demonstration, except to point out that the smashing of the shop windows was also a protest and expression of resentment against those petty profiteers, themselves robbed and cheated by big business, who in turn rob and cheat the Negroes by high prices and poor-quality goods.

The press and LaGuardia take excessive pains to say the demonstration was not a “race riot.” The demonstration was not a racial demonstration in the sense that the Negroes did not direct their protest indiscriminately against whites. Nor did white gangs invade Harlem.

The Negro people of Harlem showed extreme intelligence and understanding in what they did. They were not against individual white citizens in the streets. They were protesting, in the only way they understood, against their unbearable conditions. The protest was, in the fullest sense of the word, a racial demonstration, a demonstration against the wrongs and injustices perpetrated against the Negro people.

THE SILENCE OF “LEADERS”

Since the Detroit events, Roosevelt has not said one single word. He now has imitators. On the Harlem demonstration, Philip Randolph has imitated his master, Roosevelt, and observed a dignified silence. The rest we can foretell in advance. White, Randolph, and all such will appoint committees, “interracial committees.” They will haggle over whether one new playground or two new playgrounds should be built. They will send a letter full of signatures to the OPA [Office of Public Affairs] asking for a ceiling on rent. In other words, they will do exactly as they have always done. But the Negro people are becoming tired of words and promises.

What is to happen now? *Labor Action* during the last weeks has pointed out that the situation all over the country is grave, that the masses of the Negro people must organize themselves both for protection against the hoodlum elements such as the Klan and the official hoodlums; that they must organize themselves to fight against segregation of the Negro in the armed forces of the nation—against all forms of oppression.

The Harlem demonstration is to us nothing shameful. It is in reality a demonstration of the masses of the Negro people against their position in American capitalist society. The tremendous stir of oppressed peoples all over the world at the present time, the ferocious appeal to violence and destruction of the ruling classes, the incessant mouthings of “democracy” and the need to “die for democracy,” coupled with the shameful betrayals of democracy at home and abroad, these things are pulling the Negro people from sullen hostility to spontaneous protests against the crimes and hypocrisy of capitalist democracy.

There is nothing shameful about that. What is shameful is the fact that those who pose as the protectors of democratic law and order are the very ones who lay the basis for the persecution and condone others who more savagely follow their lead.

We say to the Negroes, therefore, that to demonstrate against tyranny and injustice has always been one of the greatest and most admired virtues of mankind. The moans and wailings of La Guardia, Walter White, and the whole capitalist press will not alter that.

The fact that the Negroes did not attack whites indiscriminately shows that they are on the verge of finding the correct answer to the problems which have plagued the Negro people for three hundred years.

What they have to do in New York and elsewhere is to organize this rebelliousness against tyranny and the insults to their intelligence, and direct it into such channels as will bring their grievances and their wrongs forcibly before the American people and the people of the whole world.

THE NEED FOR ORGANIZATION

Let them organize themselves to create their own committees and to direct properly the passionate desire for freedom and equality which now stirs all Negro youth. Let them organize themselves to march on Washington, and themselves place before the president and Congress their shameful conditions. Let them demand their rights in the name of that very democracy for which they are being called on to die. Let them make it clear, by the tightness of their organization, the determination of their demonstrations, and the resoluteness with which they present their demands, that nothing on earth will prevent them from making themselves free and equal citizens in the community, in every sphere of life, particularly the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and factories which are controlled by the government.

Let them make this clear to Roosevelt so that he must emerge from his diplomatic silence and is compelled to make clear statements on the Negro question and pass and enforce laws which guarantee to the Negro people their racial, economic, political, and social rights.

The Negro people in Harlem and elsewhere must stop looking for leaders among big names who are always in the capitalist press or filling up space in the Negro press. These are the very ones whose leadership must be avoided at all costs. True leaders are people who do what the masses of the people want them to do. And if the Negro people look for these among themselves, they will find them.

WHERE THE FUTURE LIES

Negroes also must look for allies among the great masses of the white people who are sympathetic to their point of view. Quite recently, the United Mine Workers of America put on a magnificent demonstration for their just

economic rights. Of these five hundred thousand workers, one hundred thousand were Negroes.

The Negroes must go to Lewis and to unions whose leaders have shown both in words and in deeds that they support the aspirations for equality of the large masses of the Negro people. They must inform these of their situation, of their determination to fight injustice, and they must demand that these labor leaders and unions come to their assistance in what, after all, is only the eternal fight of the poor against the rich.

The Negro workers where they are strong enough must not only take on themselves the organization of the defense of the Negro community. They are the ones best fitted to act as representatives of the Negro communities to the white workers in the labor unions.

There is absolutely nothing shameful, nothing disgraceful in demonstrating against tyranny and showing to all the world that the Negroes will no longer put up with all that they have borne for so long. What is required is to use that energy, that determination and that magnificent spirit in such a way and in such a manner as to win concrete victories and build a firm alliance between the masses of the Negro and white people and all those who suffer from the tyranny, the persecution, and the cruelties of capitalist society.

NOTE

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4.4 Feminism and the Politics of the Common in an Era of Primitive Accumulation

SILVIA FEDERICI

Reproduction precedes social production. Touch the women, touch the rock.

—Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto*

INTRODUCTION: WHY COMMONS?

At least since the Zapatistas, on December 31, 1993, took over the *zócalo* of San Cristóbal to protest legislation dissolving the *ejidal* lands of Mexico, the concept of the “commons” has gained popularity among the radical Left, internationally and in the United States, appearing as a ground of convergence among anarchists, Marxists/socialists, ecologists, and eco-feminists.¹

There are important reasons why this apparently archaic idea has come to the center of political discussion in contemporary social movements. Two in particular stand out. On the one side, there has been the demise of the statist model of revolution that for decades has sapped the efforts of radical movements to build an alternative to capitalism. On the other, the neoliberal attempt to subordinate every form of life and knowledge to the logic of the market has heightened our awareness of the danger of living in a world in which we no longer have access to seas, trees, animals, and our fellow beings except through the cash-nexus. The “new enclosures” have also made visible a world of communal properties and relations that many had believed to be extinct or had not valued until threatened with privatization.² The new enclosures ironically demonstrated that not only have commons not vanished, but new forms of social cooperation are constantly being produced, also in areas of life where none previously existed, as, for example, the Internet.

The idea of the common/s, in this context, has offered a logical and historical alternative to both state and private property, the state and the market, enabling us to reject the fiction that they are mutually exclusive and exhaustive of our political possibilities. It has also served an ideological function, as a unifying concept prefiguring the cooperative society that the radical Left is striving to create. Nevertheless, ambiguities as well as significant differences exist in the interpretations of this concept, which we need to clarify, if we want the principle of the commons to translate into a coherent political project.³

What, for example, constitutes a common? Examples abound. We have land, water, air commons, digital commons, service commons; our acquired entitlements (e.g., social security pensions) are often described as commons, and so are languages, libraries, and the collective products of past cultures. But are all these “commons” on the same level from the viewpoint of devising an anticapitalist strategy? Are they all compatible? And how can we ensure that they do not project a unity that remains to be constructed?

With these questions in mind, in this essay, I look at the politics of the commons from a feminist perspective, where *feminist* refers to a standpoint shaped by the struggle against sexual discrimination and over reproductive work, which (quoting [Peter] Linebaugh) is the rock on which society is built and by which every model of social organization must be tested.⁴ This intervention is necessary, in my view, to better define this politics, expand a debate that so far has remained male-dominated, and clarify under what conditions the principle of the common(s) can become the foundation of an anticapitalist program. Two concerns make these tasks especially important.

GLOBAL COMMONS, WORLD BANK COMMONS

First, since at least the early 1990s, the language of the commons has been appropriated by the World Bank and the United Nations, and put at the service of privatization. Under the guise of protecting biodiversity and conserving “global commons,” the bank has turned rain forests into ecological reserves, has expelled the populations that for centuries had drawn their sustenance from them, while making them available to people who do not need them but can pay for them, for instance, through ecotourism.⁵ On its side, the United Nations, in the name again of preserving the common heritage of mankind, has revised the international law governing access to the oceans, in ways enabling governments to consolidate the use of seawaters in fewer hands.⁶

The World Bank and the United Nations are not alone in their adaptation of the idea of the commons to market interests. Responding to different motivations, a revalorization of the commons has become trendy among mainstream economists and capitalist planners, witness the growing academic literature on the subject and its cognates: “social capital,” “gift economies,” “altruism.” Witness also the official recognition of this trend through the conferral of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2009 to the leading voice in this field, the political scientist Elinor Ostrom.⁷

Development planners and policy makers have discovered that, under proper conditions, a collective management of natural resources can be more efficient and less conflictual than privatization, and commons can very well be made to produce for the market.⁸ They have also recognized that, carried to the extreme, the commodification of social relations has self-defeating consequences. The extension of the commodity-form to every corner of the social factory, which neoliberalism has promoted, is an ideal limit for capitalist ideologues, but it is a project not only unrealizable but undesirable from the viewpoint of the long-term reproduction of the capitalist system. Capitalist accumulation is structurally dependent on the free appropriation of immense areas of labor and resources that must appear as externalities to the market, like the unpaid domestic work that women have provided, on which employers have relied for the reproduction of the workforce.

Not accidentally, then, long before the Wall Street “meltdown,” a variety of economists and social theorists warned that the marketization of all spheres of life is detrimental to the market’s well-functioning, for markets too—the argument goes—depend on the existence of nonmonetary relations like confidence, trust, and gift-giving.⁹ In brief, capital is learning about the virtues of the “common good.” In its July 31, 2008, issue, even the London *Economist*, the organ of capitalist free-market economics for more than 150 years, cautiously joined the chorus. “The economics of the new commons,” the journal wrote, “is still in its

infancy. It is too soon to be confident about its hypotheses. But it may yet prove a useful way of thinking about problems, such as managing the internet, intellectual property or international pollution, on which policymakers need all the help they can get.” We must be very careful, then, not to craft the discourse on the commons in such a way as to allow a crisis-ridden capitalist class to revive itself, posturing, for instance, as the guardian of the planet.

WHAT COMMONS?

A second concern is that, while international institutions have learned to make commons functional to the market, how commons can become the foundation of a noncapitalist economy is a question still unanswered. From Peter Linebaugh’s work, especially *The Magna Carta Manifesto* (2008), we have learned that commons have been the thread that has connected the history of the class struggle into our time, and indeed the fight for the commons is all around us. Mainers are fighting to preserve their fisheries and waters, residents of the Appalachian regions are joining to save their mountains threatened by strip mining, and open source and free software movements are opposing the commodification of knowledge and opening new spaces for communications and cooperation. We also have the many invisible, commoning activities and communities that people are creating in North America, which Chris Carlsson has described in his *Nowtopia*.¹⁰ As Carlsson shows, much creativity is invested in the production of “virtual commons” and forms of sociality that thrive under the radar of the money/market economy.

Most important has been the creation of urban gardens, which have spread, in the 1980s and 1990s, across the country, thanks mostly to the initiatives of immigrant communities from Africa, the Caribbean, or the South of the United States. Their significance cannot be overestimated. Urban gardens have opened the way to a “rurbanization” process that is indispensable if we are to regain control over our food production, regenerate our environment, and provide for our subsistence. The gardens are far more than a source of food security. They are centers of sociality, knowledge production, and cultural and intergenerational exchange. As Margarita Fernandez writes of gardens in New York, urban gardens “strengthen community cohesion,” as places where people come together not just to work the land but to play cards, hold weddings, and have baby showers or birthday parties.¹¹ Some have a partnership relation with local schools, whereby they give children after-school environmental education. Not last, gardens are “a medium for the transport and encounter of diverse cultural practices,” so that African vegetables and farming practices (for example) mix with those from the Caribbean.¹²

Still, the most significant feature of urban gardens is that they produce for neighborhood consumption, rather than for commercial purposes. This distinguishes them from other reproductive commons that either produce for the market, like the fisheries of the “Lobster Coast” of Maine, or are bought on the market, like the land-trusts that preserve the open spaces.¹³ The problem, however, is that urban gardens have remained a spontaneous grassroots initiative, and there have been few attempts by movements in the United States to expand their presence and to make access to land a key terrain of struggle. More generally, how the many proliferating commons being defended, developed, and fought for can be brought together to form a cohesive whole providing a foundation for a new mode of production is a question the Left has not posed.

An exception is the theory proposed by [Antonio] Negri and [Michael] Hardt in *Empire* (2000), *Multitude* (2004), and more recently *Commonwealth* (2009), which argues that a society built on the principle of “the common” is already evolving from the informatization of production. According to this theory, as production becomes predominantly a production of knowledge organized through the Internet, a common space is formed which escapes the problem of defining rules of inclusion or exclusion, because access and use multiply the resources available on the net, rather than subtracting from them, thus signifying the possibility of a society built on abundance—the only remaining hurdle confronting the “multitude” being presumably how to prevent the capitalist “capture” of the wealth produced.

The appeal of this theory is that it does not separate the formation of “the common” from the organization of work and production as already constituted, but sees it immanent in it. Its limit is that it does not question the material basis of the digital technology the Internet relies on, overlooking the fact that computers depend on economic activities—mining, microchip and rare earth production—that, as currently organized, are extremely destructive, socially and ecologically.¹⁴ Moreover, with its emphasis on science, knowledge production, and information, this theory skirts the question of the reproduction of everyday life. This, however, is true of the discourse on the commons as whole, which has generally focused on the formal preconditions for their existence but much less on the possibilities provided by existing commons, and their potential to create forms of reproduction enabling us to resist dependence on wage labor and subordination to capitalist relations.

WOMEN AND THE COMMONS

It is in this context that a feminist perspective on the commons is important. It begins with the realization that, as the primary subjects of reproduc-

tive work, historically and in our time, women have depended more than men on access to communal resources, and have been most committed to their defense. As I wrote in *Caliban and the Witch* (2004), in the first phase of capitalist development, women were in the front of the struggle against land enclosures both in England and the “New World,” and the staunchest defenders of the communal cultures that European colonization attempted to destroy. In Peru, when the Spanish conquistadores took control of their villages, women fled to the high mountains, where they re-created forms of collective life that have survived to this day. Not surprisingly, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the most violent attack on women in the history of the world: the persecution of women as witches. Today, in the face of a new process of primitive accumulation, women are the main social force standing in the way of a complete commercialization of nature. Women are the subsistence farmers of the world. In Africa, they produce 80 percent of the food people consume, despite the attempts made by the World Bank and other agencies to convince them to divert their activities to cash-cropping. Refusal to be without access to land has been so strong that, in the towns, many women have taken over plots in public lands, planted corn and cassava in vacant lots, in this process changing the urban landscape of African cities and breaking down the separation between town and country.¹⁵ In India, too, women have restored degraded forests, guarded trees, joined hands to chase away the loggers, and made blockades against mining operations and the construction of dams.¹⁶

The other side of women’s struggle for direct access to means of reproduction has been the formation, across the third world—from Cambodia to Senegal—of credit associations that function as money commons.¹⁷ Differently named, “tontines” (in parts of Africa) are autonomous, self-managed, women-made banking systems, providing cash to individuals or groups that can have no access to banks, working purely on the basis of trust. In this, they are completely different from the microcredit systems promoted by the World Bank, which functions on the basis of shame, arriving to the extreme (e.g., in Niger) of posting in public places the pictures of the women who fail to repay the loans so that some have been driven to suicide.¹⁸

Women have also led the effort to collectivize reproductive labor both as a means to economize on the cost of reproduction and protect each other from poverty, state violence, and the violence of individual men. An outstanding example are the *ola* communes (common kitchens) that women in Chile and in Peru set up in the 1980s, when, because of stiff inflation, they could no longer afford to shop alone.¹⁹ Like collective reforestation and land reclamation, these practices are the expression of a world where communal bonds are still strong. It would be a mistake, however, to consider them as something

prepolitical, “natural,” a product of “tradition.” In reality, as Leo Podlashuc notes in “Saving Women: Saving the Commons,” these struggles shape a collective identity, constitute a counterpower in the home and the community, and open a process of self-valorization and self-determination from which we have much to learn.

The first lesson to be gained from these struggles is that the “commoning” of the material means of reproduction is the primary mechanism by which a collective interest and mutual bonds are created. It is also the first line of resistance to a life of enslavement, whether in armies, brothels, or sweatshops. For us, in North America, an added lesson is that by pooling our resources, by reclaiming land and waters, and turning them into a common, we could begin to delink our reproduction from the commodity flows that through the world market are responsible for the dispossession of so many people in other parts of the world. We could disentangle our livelihood, not only from the world market but from the war machine and prison system on which the hegemony of the world market depends. Not last we could move beyond the abstract solidarity that often characterizes relations in the movement, which limits our commitment and capacity to endure, and the risks we are willing to take.

Undoubtedly, this is a formidable task that can only be accomplished through a long-term process of consciousness raising, cross-cultural exchange, and coalition building, with all the communities throughout the United States who are vitally interested in the reclamation of the land, starting with the First American Nations. Although this task may seem more difficult now than passing through the eye of a needle, it is also the only condition to broaden the space of our autonomy, cease feeding into the process of capital accumulation, and refuse to accept that our reproduction occurs at the expense of the world’s other commoners and commons.

FEMINIST RECONSTRUCTIONS

What this task entails is powerfully expressed by Maria Mies when she points out that the production of commons requires first a profound transformation in our everyday life, in order to recombine what the social division of labor in capitalism has separated. For the distancing of production from reproduction and consumption leads us to ignore the conditions under which what we eat or wear, or work with, have been produced, their social and environmental cost, and the fate of the population on whom the waste we produce is unloaded.²⁰

In other words, we need to overcome the state of constant denial and irresponsibility, concerning the consequences of our actions, resulting from the

destructive ways in which the social division of labor is organized in capitalism; short of that, the production of our life inevitably becomes a production of death for others. As Mies points out, globalization has worsened this crisis, widening the distances between what is produced and what is consumed, thereby intensifying, despite the appearance of an increased global interconnectedness, our blindness to the blood in the food we eat, the petroleum we use, the clothes we wear, and the computers with which we communicate.²¹

Overcoming this oblivion is where a feminist perspective teaches us to start in our reconstruction of the commons. No common is possible unless we refuse to base our life, our reproduction on the suffering of others, unless we refuse to see ourselves as separate from them. Indeed if “commoning” has any meaning, it must be the production of ourselves as a common subject. This is how we must understand the slogan “no commons without community.” But “community” is not intended as a gated reality, a grouping of people joined by exclusive interests separating them from others, as with community formed on the basis of religion or ethnicity. Community as a quality of relations, a principle of cooperation and responsibility: to each other, the earth, the forests, the seas, the animals.

Certainly, the achievement of such community, like collectivizing our everyday work of reproduction, can only be a beginning. It is no substitute for broader antiprivatization campaigns and the reconstitution of our commonwealth. But it is an essential part of the process of our education for collective governance and the recognition of history as a collective project—the main casualty of the neoliberal era of capitalism.

On this account, we must include in our political agenda the communalization/collectivization of housework, reviving that rich feminist tradition that we have in the United States, that stretches from the utopian socialist experiments of the mid-nineteenth century to the attempts that the “materialist feminists” made, from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, to reorganize and socialize domestic work and thereby the home, and the neighborhood, through collective housekeeping—efforts that continued until the 1920s, when the “Red Scare” put an end to them.²² These practices, and the ability that past feminists have had to look at reproductive labor as an important sphere of human activity, not to be negated but to be revolutionized, must be revisited and revalorized.

One crucial reason for creating collective forms of living is that the reproduction of human beings is the most labor-intensive work on Earth, and to a large extent it is work that is irreducible to mechanization. We cannot mechanize childcare or the care of the ill, or the psychological work necessary to reintegrate our physical and emotional balance. Despite the efforts that futuristic industrialists are making, we cannot robotize “care” except at

a terrible cost for the people involved. No one will accept “nursebots” as care givers, especially for children and the ill. Shared responsibility and cooperative work, not given at the cost of the health of the providers, are the only guarantees of proper care. For centuries the reproduction of human beings has been a collective process. It has been the work of extended families and communities, on which people could rely, especially in proletarian neighborhoods, even when they lived alone, so that old age was not accompanied by the desolate loneliness and dependence that so many of our elderly experience. It is only with the advent of capitalism that reproduction has been completely privatized, a process that is now carried to a degree that it destroys our lives. This we need to change if we are to put an end to the steady devaluation and fragmentation of our lives.

The times are propitious for such a start. As the capitalist crisis is destroying the basic element of reproduction for millions of people across the world, including the United States, the reconstruction of our everyday life is a possibility and a necessity. Like strikes, social/economic crises break the discipline of the wage work, forcing on us new forms of sociality. This is what occurred during the Great Depression, which produced a movement of hobo-men who turned the freight trains into their commons seeking freedom in mobility and nomadism.²³ At the intersections of railroad lines, they organized “hobo jungles,” prefigurations, with their self-governance rules and solidarity, of the communist world in which many of their residents believed.²⁴ However, but for a few “box-car Berthas,” this was predominantly a masculine world, a fraternity of men, and in the long term it could not be sustained.²⁵ Once the economic crisis and the war came to an end, the hobo men were domesticated by the two grand engines of labor-power fixation: the family and the house. Mindful of the threat of working-class recomposition in the Depression, American capital excelled in its application of the principle that has characterized the organization of economic life: cooperation at the point of production, separation and atomization at the point of reproduction. The atomized, serialized family house Levittown provided, compounded by its umbilical appendix, the car, not only sedentarized the worker but put an end to the type of autonomous workers’ commons the hobo jungles had represented.²⁶ Today, as millions of Americans’ houses and cars have been repossessed, as foreclosures, evictions, and the massive loss of employment are again breaking down the pillars of the capitalist discipline of work, new common grounds are again taking shape, like the tent cities that are sprawling from coast to coast. This time, however, it is women who must build the new commons, so that they do not remain transient spaces or temporary autonomous zones, but become the foundation of new forms of social reproduction.

If the house is the *oikos* on which the economy is built, then it is women, historically the house-workers and house-prisoners, who must take the initiative to reclaim the house as a center of collective life, one traversed by multiple people and forms of cooperation, providing safety without isolation and fixation, allowing for the sharing and circulation of community possessions, and above all providing the foundation for collective forms of reproduction. As already suggested, we can draw inspiration for this project from the programs of the nineteenth century “materialist feminists” who, convinced that the home was an important “spatial component of the economic oppression of women,” organized communal kitchens and cooperative households, calling for workers’ control of reproduction.²⁷ These objectives are crucial at present: breaking down the isolation of life in a private home is not only a precondition for meeting our most basic needs and increasing our power with regard to employers and the state. As Massimo de Angelis has reminded us, it is also a protection from ecological disaster. For there can be no doubt about the destructive consequences of the “uneconomic” multiplication of reproductive assets and self-enclosed dwellings, dissipating, in the winter, warmth into the atmosphere, exposing us to unmitigated heat in the summer, which we now call our homes. Most important, we cannot build an alternative society and a strong self-reproducing movement unless we redefine in more cooperative ways our reproduction and put an end to the separation between the personal and the political, political activism and the reproduction of everyday life.

It remains to clarify that assigning women this task of commoning/collectivizing reproduction is not to concede to a naturalistic conception of “femininity.” Understandably, many feminists would view this possibility as “a fate worse than death.” It is deeply sculpted in our collective consciousness that women have been designated as men’s common, a natural source of wealth and services to be as freely appropriated by them as the capitalists have appropriated the wealth of nature. But, quoting Dolores Hayden, the reorganization of reproductive work, and therefore the reorganization of the structure of housing and public space is not a question of identity; it is a labor question and, we can add, a power and safety question.²⁸ I am reminded here of the experience of the women members of the Landless People’s Movement of Brazil (MST), who when their communities won the right to maintain the land which they had occupied, insisted that the new houses should be built to form one compound, so that they could continue to share their housework, wash together, cook together, taking turns with men, as they had done in the course of the struggle, and be ready to run to give each other support if abused by men. Arguing that women should take the lead in the collectivization of reproductive work and housing is

not to naturalize housework as a female vocation. It is refusing to obliterate the collective experiences, knowledge, and struggles that women have accumulated concerning reproductive work, whose history has been an essential part of our resistance to capitalism. Reconnecting with this history is today for women and men a crucial step, both for undoing the gendered architecture of our lives and reconstructing our homes and lives as commons.

NOTES

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1. The U.K.-based electronic journal the *Commoner* has been a key source on the politics of the commons and its theoretical groundings for over ten years (see <http://www.commoner.org.uk>).

2. A case in point is the struggle that is taking place in many communities in Maine against Nestle’s appropriation of Maine waters to bottle Portland Spring. Nestle’s theft has made people aware of the vital importance of these waters and the supporting aquifers and has truly constituted them as a common. See Food and Water Watch, “All Bottled Up: Nestle’s Pursuit of Community Water,” January 2009, available at https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/sites/default/files/all_bottled_up_report_jan_2009_.pdf.

3. An excellent site for current debates on the commons is the December 2009 issue of the U.K. movement journal *Turbulence*; see <http://www.turbulence.org>.

4. Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

5. See, on this subject, the important article by Ana Isla “Who Pays for the Kyoto Protocol?” in *Eco-Sufficiency and Global Justice: Women Write Political Ecology*, ed. Ariel Salleh (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 199–217, in which the author describes how the conservation of the biodiversity has provided the World Bank and other international agencies with the pretext for the enclosure of the rain forests, on the ground that they represent “carbon sinks” and “oxygen generators.”

6. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, passed in November 1994, establishes a two-hundred-mile offshore limit, defining an Exclusive Economic Zone, where nations can exploit, manage, and protect resources, from fisheries to natural gas. It also sets regulations for mining in deep sea and for the use of resulting profit.

7. As described by Wikipedia, Ostrom’s work focuses on common pool resources and emphasizes “how humans interact with ecosystems to maintain long-term sustainable resource yields.” See “Elinor Ostrom,” *Wikipedia*, August 19, 2017, available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elinor_Ostrom.

8. See, on this topic, Calestous Juma and J. B. Ojwang, eds., *In Land We Trust: Environment, Private Property and Constitutional Change* (London: Zed Books, 1996), an early treatise on the effectiveness of communal property relations in the context of capitalist development and efforts.

9. David Bollier, *Silent Theft: The Private Plunder of Our Common Wealth* (London: Routledge, 2002).

10. Chris Carlsson, *Nowtopia* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2008).
11. See Margarita Fernandez, "Cultivating Community, Food and Empowerment," unpublished manuscript, 2003, pp. 23–26. An early, important work on urban gardens is Peter Lamborn Wilson and Bill Weinberg, eds., *Avant Gardening: Ecological Struggle in the City and the World* (New York: Autonomedia, 1999).
12. Fernandez, "Cultivating Community."
13. However the fishing "commons" of Maine are currently threatened with a new privatizing policy, justified in the name of preservation, ironically labeled "catch shares." This is a system, already applied in Canada and Alaska, whereby local governments set a limit to how much fish can be caught and allocate individual shares on the basis of the amount of fishing done in the past. This system has proven to be disastrous for small, independent fishermen who are soon forced to sell their share to the highest bidders. Protest against its implementation is now mounting in the fishing communities of Maine. See "Catch Shares or Share-Croppers?" *Fishermen's Voice* 14, no. 12 (2009), available at <http://www.fishermensvoice.com/archives/1209catchsharesorsharecroppers.html>.
14. It has been calculated, for example, that just to produce a personal computer, thirty-three thousand liters of waters and fifteen to nineteen tons of material are required. Saral Sarkar, *Eco-Socialism or Eco-Capitalism? A Critical Analysis of Humanity's Fundamental Choices* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 126.
15. Silvia Federici, "Women, Land Struggles, and the Reconstruction of the Commons," *WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society* 14, no. 1 (2011): 52.
16. Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (London: Zed Books, 1989); Vandana Shiva, *Ecology and the Politics of Survival: Conflicts over Natural Resources in India* (New Delhi: Sage, 1991), 102–117, 274.
17. Leo Podlashuc, "Saving Women: Saving the Commons," in Salleh, *Eco-Sufficiency and Global Justice: Women Write Political Ecology*, 268–290.
18. Ousseina Alidou, interview by the author.
19. Jo Fisher, *Out of the Shadows: Women, Resistance and Politics in South America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993); Carol Andreas, *When Women Rebel: The Rise of Popular Feminism in Peru* (Westport, CT: Independent, 1985).
20. Veronica Bennholdt-Thomsen and Maria Mies, *The Subsistence Perspective: Beyond the Globalised Economy* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 141.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: The Future of Housing, Work and Family Life* (New York: Norton, 1986); Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods and Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982).
23. George Caffentzis, "Three Temporal Dimensions of Class Struggle," paper presented at ISA annual meeting, San Diego, CA, March 2006.
24. Nels Anderson, *Men on the Move* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Todd Depastino, *Citizen Hobo* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); George Caffentzis, "Three Temporal Dimensions of Class Struggle," in *In Letters of Blood and Fire: Work, Machines, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2013).
25. *Boxcar Bertha* (1972) is Martin Scorsese's adaptation of *Sister of the Road*, the fictionalized autobiography of radical and transient Bertha Thompson.
26. Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*.
27. Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, 295.
28. Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, 230.

4.5 #BlackLivesMatter

ALICIA GARZA

THE CREATION OF A MOVEMENT

I created #BlackLivesMatter with Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, two of my sisters, as a call to action for Black people after seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin was posthumously placed on trial for his own murder and the killer, George Zimmerman, was not held accountable for the crime he committed. It was a response to the anti-Black racism that permeates our society and also, unfortunately, our movements.

Black Lives Matter¹ is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks' contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.

We were humbled when cultural workers, artists, designers, and techies offered their labor and love to expand #BlackLivesMatter beyond a social media hashtag. Opal, Patrisse, and I created the infrastructure for this movement project—moving the hashtag from social media to the streets. Our team grew through a very successful Black Lives Matter ride, led and designed by Patrisse and Darnell L. Moore, organized to support the movement that is growing in St. Louis, Missouri, after eighteen-year-old Mike Brown was killed at the hands of Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson. We've hosted national conference calls focused on issues of critical importance to Black people working hard for the liberation of our people. We've connected people across the country working to end the various forms of injustice impacting our people. We've created space for the celebration and humanization of Black lives.

THE THEFT OF QUEER BLACK WOMEN'S WORK

As people took the #BlackLivesMatter demand into the streets, mainstream media and corporations also took up the call, and #BlackLivesMatter appeared in an episode of *Law and Order: SVU* in a mash-up containing the Paula Deen racism scandal and the tragedy of the murder of Trayvon Martin.

Suddenly, we began to come across varied adaptations of our work—all lives matter, brown lives matter, migrant lives matter, women's lives matter, and on and on. While imitation is said to be the highest form of flattery, I was surprised when an organization called to ask if they could use "Black Lives Matter" in one of their campaigns. We agreed to it, with the caveat that (a) as

a team, we preferred that they not use the meme to celebrate the imprisonment of any individual, and (b) it was important to us that they acknowledge the genesis of #BlackLivesMatter. I was surprised when they did exactly the opposite and then justified their actions by saying they hadn't used the "exact" slogan and, therefore, deemed it okay to take our work, use it as their own, fail to credit where it came from, and then use it to applaud incarceration.

I was surprised when a community institution wrote asking us to provide materials and action steps for an art show they were curating, titled "Our Lives Matter." When questioned about who was involved and why they felt the need to change the very specific call and demand around Black lives to "our lives," I was told the artists decided it needed to be more inclusive of all people of color. I was even more surprised when, in the promotion of their event, one of the artists conducted an interview that completely erased the origins of their work—rooted in the labor and love of queer Black women.

Pause.

When you design an event/campaign/et cetera based on the work of queer Black women, don't invite them to participate in shaping it but ask them to provide materials and ideas for next steps for said event; that is racism in practice. It's also heteropatriarchal. Straight men, unintentionally or intentionally, have taken the work of queer Black women and erased our contributions. Perhaps if we were the charismatic Black men many are rallying around these days, it would have been a different story, but being queer Black women in this society (and apparently within these movements) tends to equal invisibility and nonrelevance.

We completely expect those who benefit directly and improperly from White supremacy to try to erase our existence. We fight that every day. But when it happens among our allies, we are baffled, we are saddened, and we are enraged. And it's time to have the political conversation about why that's not okay.

We are grateful to our allies who have stepped up to the call that Black lives matter and taken it as an opportunity to not just stand in solidarity with us but investigate the ways in which anti-Black racism is perpetuated in their own communities. We are also grateful to those allies who were willing to engage in critical dialogue with us about this unfortunate and problematic dynamic. And for those who we have not yet had the opportunity to engage with around the adaptations of the Black Lives Matter call, please consider the following points.

BROADENING THE CONVERSATION TO INCLUDE BLACK LIFE

Black Lives Matter is a unique contribution that goes beyond extrajudicial killings of Black people by police and vigilantes. It goes beyond the narrow

nationalism that can be prevalent within some Black communities, which merely call on Black people to love Black, live Black, and buy Black, keeping straight cis Black men in the front of the movement while our sisters, queer and trans and disabled folk, take up roles in the background or not at all. Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black undocumented folks, folks with records, women, and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. It is a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement.

When we say “Black lives matter,” we are talking about the ways in which Black people are deprived of our basic human rights and dignity. It is an acknowledgment that Black poverty and genocide is state violence. It is an acknowledgment that one million Black people are locked in cages in this country—one half of all people in prisons or jails—which is an act of state violence. It is an acknowledgment that Black women continue to bear the burden of a relentless assault on our children and our families, and that assault is an act of state violence. Black queer and trans folks bearing a unique burden in a heteropatriarchal society that disposes of us like garbage and simultaneously fetishizes us and profits off us is state violence; the fact that five hundred thousand Black people in the United States are undocumented immigrants and relegated to the shadows is state violence; the fact that Black girls are used as negotiating chips during times of conflict and war is state violence; the fact that Black folks living with disabilities and different abilities bear the burden of state-sponsored Darwinian experiments that attempt to squeeze us into boxes of normality defined by White supremacy is state violence. And the fact is that the lives of Black people—not ALL people—exist within these conditions is consequence of state violence.

When Black people get free, everybody gets free.

#BlackLivesMatter doesn't mean your life isn't important—it means that Black lives, which are seen as without value within White supremacy, are important to your liberation. Given the disproportionate impact state violence has on Black lives, we understand that when Black people in this country get free, the benefits will be wide reaching and transformative for society as a whole. When we are able to end hypercriminalization and hypersexualization of Black people and end the poverty, control, and surveillance of Black people, every single person in this world has a better shot at getting and staying free. When Black people get free, everybody gets free. This is why we call on Black people and our allies to take up the call that Black lives matter. We're not saying Black lives are more important than other lives, or that other lives are not criminalized and oppressed in various ways. We remain in active

solidarity with all oppressed people who are fighting for their liberation, and we know that our destinies are intertwined.

And, to keep it real, it is appropriate and necessary to have strategy and action centered around Blackness without other non-Black communities of color, or White folks for that matter, needing to find a place and a way to center themselves within it. It is appropriate and necessary for us to acknowledge the critical role that Black lives and struggles for Black liberation have played in inspiring and anchoring, through practice and theory, social movements for the liberation of all people. The women's movement, the Chicano liberation movement, queer movements, and many more have adopted the strategies, tactics, and theory of the Black liberation movement. And if we are committed to a world where all lives matter, we are called to support the very movement that inspired and activated so many more. That means supporting and acknowledging Black lives.

Progressive movements in the United States have made some unfortunate errors when they push for unity at the expense of really understanding the concrete differences in context, experience, and oppression. In other words, some want unity without struggle. As people who have our minds stayed on freedom, we can learn to fight anti-Black racism by examining the ways in which we participate in it, even unintentionally, instead of the worn-out and sloppy practice of drawing lazy parallels of unity between peoples with vastly different experiences and histories.

When we deploy "All Lives Matter" to correct an intervention specifically created to address anti-Blackness, we lose the ways in which the state apparatus has built a program of genocide and repression mostly on the backs of Black people—beginning with the theft of millions of people for free labor—and then adapted it to control, murder, and profit off other communities of color and immigrant communities. We perpetuate a level of White supremacist domination by reproducing a tired trope that we are all the same, rather than acknowledging that non-Black oppressed people in this country both are affected by racism and domination and simultaneously *benefit* from anti-Black racism.

When you drop "Black" from the equation of whose lives matter, and then fail to acknowledge that it came from somewhere, you further a legacy of erasing Black lives and Black contributions from our movement legacy. And consider whether when dropping the "Black" you are, intentionally or unintentionally, erasing Black folks from the conversation or homogenizing very different experiences. The legacy and prevalence of anti-Black racism and heteropatriarchy is a linchpin holding together this unsustainable economy. And that's not an accidental analogy.

In 2014, heteropatriarchy and anti-Black racism within our movement is real and felt. It's killing us, and it's killing our potential to build power for transformative social change. When you adopt the work of queer women of color, don't name or recognize it, and promote it as if it has no history of its own, such actions are problematic. When I use Assata Shakur's powerful demand in my organizing work, I always begin by sharing where it comes from, sharing about Assata's significance to the Black Liberation Movement, what its political purpose and message is, and why it's important in our context.

THE APPROPRIATION OF BLACK STRUGGLE

When you adopt Black Lives Matter and transform it into something else (if you feel you really need to do that—see the preceding arguments not to), it's appropriate politically to credit the lineage from which your adapted work derived. It's important that we work together to build and acknowledge the legacy of Black contributions to the struggle for human rights. If you adapt Black Lives Matter, use the opportunity to talk about its inception and political framing. Lift up Black lives as an opportunity to connect struggles across race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality, and disability.

And, perhaps more importantly, when Black people cry out in defense of our lives, which are uniquely, systematically, and savagely targeted by the state, we are asking you, our family, to stand with us in affirming Black lives. Not just all lives. Black lives. Please do not change the conversation by talking about how your life matters, too. It does, but we need less watered-down unity and more active solidarities with us, Black people, unwaveringly, in defense of our humanity. Our collective futures depend on it.

NOTE

1. Black Lives Matter is a chapter-based national organization working for the validity of Black life. They are working to (re)build the Black liberation movement. See the open letter on the movement's website, at <http://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory>.

5 | Critical Pedagogy

Because the society we live in is devoted to acquiring property and making a profit, most people see the having mode as the most natural mode of existence. . . . Our education generally tries to train people to have knowledge as a possession, by and large commensurate with the amount of property or social prestige they are likely to have in later life. The minimum they receive is the amount they will need in order to function properly in their work.

—Erich Fromm, *To Have or To Be?*

To educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean, making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them . . . that there is no famous man who will take the responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people. . . . A government or a party gets the people it deserves, and sooner or later a people gets the government it deserves.

—Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

5.1 Beyond Dystopian Visions in the Age of Neoliberal Violence

HENRY A. GIROUX

George Orwell's nightmarish vision of a totalitarian society casts a dark shadow over the United States. We live at a time in which institutions that were meant to limit human suffering and misfortune and protect the public from the excesses of the market have been either weakened or abolished.¹ The consequences of this speak to a different experience of total terror in the twenty-first century. The basic elements can be seen clearly in the ongoing and ruthless assault on the social state, unions, higher education, workers, students, poor minority youth, and any vestige of the social contract. Free market policies, values, and practices with their emphasis on the privatization of public wealth, the elimination of social protections, and the deregulation of economic activity now shape practically every commanding political and economic institution in both countries. We don't see the work camps or death

camps that characterized the catastrophes of midcentury totalitarian regimes. But as a generation of black youth can attest, you don't have to be in jail to feel imprisoned, especially when it is increasingly difficult to take control of one's life and means in a meaningful way.

We live at a time when politics is nation-based and power is global. Global markets now trump the national, rendering the political culture and institutions of modernity obsolete. The financial elite now float beyond national borders and no longer care about the welfare state, the common good, or for that matter any institution not subordinated to the dictates of finance capitalism. Hence, the ruling elites make no concessions in their pursuits of power and profits. The social contract of the past, especially in the United States, is now on life support as social provisions are cut, pensions are decimated, and the certainty of a once-secure job disappears. Many neoliberal societies are now governed by politicians and financial elites who no longer believe in social investments and are more than willing to condemn young people and others—often paralyzed by the precariousness and instability that haunts their lives and future—to a savage form of casino capitalism.

The mantras of deregulation, privatization, commodification, and the unimpeded flow of capital now drive politics and concentrate power in the hands of the 1 percent. Class warfare has merged with neoconservative policies to engage in permanent warfare both abroad and at home. There are no safe spaces free from the reach of capital and the tentacles of the surveillance and punishing state. The basic imperatives of casino capitalism—extending from eliminating corporate taxes and shifting wealth from the public to the private sector to dismantling corporate regulations and insisting that markets should govern all of social life—have become the new common sense. Any viable notion of the social, solidarity, and shared democratic values are now viewed as a pathology, replaced by a survival-of-the-fittest ethic, the celebration of self-interest, and a notion of the good life entirely tied to a vapid consumerist ethic.²

With the return of the new Gilded Age, not only are democratic institutions, values, and social protections at risk in many countries, but the civic, pedagogical, and formative cultures that make them central to democratic life are in danger of disappearing altogether. Poverty, joblessness, low-wage work, and the threat of state-sanctioned violence produce among many populations the ongoing fear of a life of perpetual misery and an ongoing struggle simply to survive. Insecurity coupled with a climate of fear and surveillance dampens dissent and promotes an ethical tranquilization fed daily by the mobilization of moral panics, whether they reference the violence of lone domestic terrorists, ISIS thugs blowing up malls, immigrants swarming across borders, or gay people seeking marriage certificates.

Underlying the rise of the authoritarian state and the forces that hide in the shadows is a politics indebted to promoting historical and social amnesia. The new authoritarianism is strongly indebted to what Orwell once called a “protective stupidity” that negates political life and divests language of its critical content.³ Neoliberal authoritarianism has changed the language of politics and everyday life through a malicious public pedagogy that turns reason on its head and normalizes a culture of fear, war, surveillance, and exploitation. That is, the heavy hand of Orwellian control is evident in those dominant cultural apparatuses that extend from schools to print, audio, and screen cultures, which now serve as disimagination machines attacking any critical notion of politics that makes a claim to be educative in its attempts to enable the conditions for changing “the ways in which people might think critically.”⁴

Higher education represents one area where neoliberalism wages war on any field of study that might encourage students to think critically. One egregious example was on full display in North Carolina, where Republican Party members who control the Board of Governors decimated higher education in that state by voting to cut forty-six degree programs. One member defended such cuts with the comment: “We’re capitalists, and we have to look at what the demand is, and we have to respond to the demand.”⁵ This is more than an example of crude economic instrumentalism, it is also a recipe for instituting an academic culture of thoughtlessness and a kind of stupidity receptive to what Hannah Arendt once called totalitarianism. In Wisconsin, Governor Scott Walker has eliminated tenure at Wisconsin’s public universities and eviscerated any vestige of shared governance.⁶ He also cut \$200 million from the state higher education budget, which is not surprising given his hatred of public education.

Both of these examples point to a new breed of politician waging war on higher education, critical pedagogy, the public good, and any viable notion of the social state. Like many of their politically extremist colleagues, they reflect an era that exhibits zero tolerance for economic and racial justice and “infinite tolerance for the crimes of bankers and government embezzlers which affect the lives of millions.”⁷ Under such conditions, material violence is now matched by symbolic violence, as made evident by the proliferation of images, institutions, and narratives that legitimate not only the manufactured ignorance of consumer culture and its corollary worship of wealth and celebrity but also what might be called an expanding politics of disposability.

Rendered redundant as a result of the collapse of the welfare state, a pervasive racism, a growing disparity in income and wealth, and a take-no-prisoners market-driven ideology, an increasing number of individuals and groups—especially young people, low-income groups, and minorities of

class and color—are being demonized, criminalized, or simply abandoned by virtue of their inability to participate in rituals of consumption due to low-paying jobs, poor health, or pressing family needs. What João Biehl has called “zones of social abandonment” now accelerate the disposability of the unwanted.⁸ For example, poor minority and low-income youth, especially, are often warehoused in schools that resemble boot camps, dispersed to dank and dangerous workplaces far from the enclaves of the tourist industries, incarcerated in prisons that privilege punishment over rehabilitation, and consigned to the increasing army of the permanently unemployed.

People who were once viewed as facing dire problems in need of state intervention and social protection are now seen as a problem threatening society. With successive waves of get-tough-on-crime policy, the war on poverty has become a war against the poor. Even the plight of the homeless is defined less as a political and economic issue in need of social reform than as a matter of law and order. Yet criminalizing the homeless for crimes such as falling asleep in public “does nothing to break the cycle of poverty or prevent homelessness in the future.”⁹ If mass incarceration is one index of an emerging punishing state, another register is when government budgets for prison construction eclipse funds for higher education. Indeed, the transformation of the social state into the corporate-controlled punishing state is made startlingly clear when young people, to paraphrase W.E.B. Du Bois, become problem people rather than people who face problems.

Already disenfranchised by virtue of their age, young people are under assault in ways that are entirely new because they now face a world that is far more precarious than at any other time in recent history. Not only do many of them live in a space of social homelessness in which austerity and a politics of uncertainty lock them out of a secure future, they also find themselves inhabiting a society that seeks to silence them as it makes them invisible. Victims of a neoliberal regime that smashes their hopes and attempts to exclude them from the fruits of democracy, young people are now told not to expect too much. Written out of any claim to the economic and social resources of the larger society, they are increasingly told to accept the status of being “stateless, faceless, and functionless” nomads, a plight for which they alone have to accept responsibility.¹⁰ Increasing numbers of youth suffer mental anguish and overt distress even, perhaps especially, among the college bound, debt-ridden, and unemployed whose numbers are growing exponentially. Many reports claim that “young Americans are suffering from rising levels of anxiety, stress, depression and even suicide.” For example, “one out of every five young people and one out of every four college students . . . suffers from some form of diagnosable mental illness.”¹¹

The politics of disability with its expanding machineries of civic and social death, terminal exclusion, and zones of abandonment represents a dangerous historical moment and must be addressed within the context of a market-driven society that is rewriting the meaning of common sense, agency, desire, and politics itself. After the 2008 recession, the capitalist dream machine is back with huge profits for hedge fund managers, major players in the financial service industries, and the denizens of the ultra rich. In these new landscapes of wealth, exclusion, and fraud, the commanding institutions of casino capitalism promote a winner-take-all ethos and aggressively undermine a more egalitarian distribution of wealth via corporate taxation. In addition, the financial elite defund crucial social services such as food stamp programs for poor children and attack labor unions, gay rights, and women's reproductive rights while waging a counterrevolution against the principles of social citizenship and democracy. In this instance, the war on the poor, women, black youth, immigrants, and labor is part of the war on democracy and signifies a new thrust toward what might be called the authoritarian rule of corporate sovereignty and governance.

Politics and power are now on the side of legally protected lawlessness, as is evident in the state's endless violations of civil liberties, freedom of speech, and many constitutional rights, mostly done in the name of national security. Lawlessness wraps itself in government dictates, as is evident in such policies as the Patriot Act, the National Defense Authorization Act, the Military Commissions Act, and a host of other legal illegalities. These would include the right of the president "to order the assassination of any citizen whom he considers allied with terrorists,"¹² to use secret evidence to detain individuals indefinitely, to develop a massive surveillance apparatus to monitor every audio and electronic communication used by citizens who have not committed a crime, to employ state torture against those considered enemy combatants, and to block the courts from prosecuting officials who commit such heinous crimes.¹³ In reading Orwell's dystopia, what becomes clear is that his nightmarish future has become our present, and there is more under assault than simply the individual's right to privacy.

Power in its most oppressive forms is deployed not only by various repressive government policies and intelligence agencies but also through a predatory and market-driven culture that turns violence into entertainment, foreign aggression into video games, and domestic violence into a goose-stepping celebration of masculinity and the mad values of unbridled militarism. At the same time, the increasing circulation of public narratives and public displays of cruelty and moral indifference continue to maim and suffocate the exercise of reason and social responsibility. What we have been witnessing in the United States since the 1980s and the Reagan-Thatcher

disavowal of all things social is a kind of hardening of the culture marked by an increasing indifference to matters of empathy and an erasure of ethical considerations.

Evidence of such cruelty is everywhere. We see it in the words of West Virginia Republican lawmaker Ray Canterbury, who added a requirement to a bill—without irony—intended to end child hunger in which schoolchildren would be forced to work in exchange for free school meals. As he put it, “I think it would be a good idea if perhaps we had the kids work for their lunches: trash to be taken out, hallways to be swept, lawns to be mowed, make them earn it.”¹⁴ Newt Gingrich has made a similar argument—one that is even crueler, if that is possible. At a 2011 speech given at Harvard University, he argued that it was time to relax child labor laws, which he called “truly stupid.”¹⁵ It gets worse. He linked this suggestion to the call for “getting rid of unionized janitors . . . and pay local students to take care of the school. The kids would actually do work, they would have cash, they would have pride in the school, they’d begin the process of rising.”¹⁶ This policy suggestion is more than Dickensian; it is draconian and suggests a deep disrespect for working people and a lack of knowledge regarding what school janitors actually do. Gingrich mimics a neoliberal ideology that separates economic actions from social costs. He seems to be clueless about whether nine- and thirteen-year-olds could perform work that is often backbreaking, brutalizing, and sometimes dangerous, including tasks such as working with hazardous chemicals, doing basic plumbing work, and cleaning floors and toilets. To impose this type of work on poor children who allegedly need it to teach them something about character borders on insanity. At the same time, Gingrich seems clueless about keeping poor children in school and has no qualms about putting school janitors out of work, as if they don’t need to make a living wage to pay hospital bills and “put food on the table for their own children.”¹⁷

Neoliberalism has produced a broad landscape of cruelty, precarity, and disposability. We see and hear it in the words of President Donald Trump, who infamously stated that Mexican immigrants are rapists and drug dealers. Or in the words of a hedge fund operator who claimed that homeless shelters generate poverty because they bring people into a web of dependency. More recently, there was the egregious case of Martin Shkreli, the thirty-two-year-old chief executive of Turing Pharmaceuticals who raised by 5,000 percent a drug used by patients affected with HIV and cancer. The price of a pill went from \$13.50 to \$750.00, imposing an enormous financial hardship on patients requiring the drug to fight potentially deadly infections. Shkreli, who has been quoted as saying he likes money more than people, responded initially to criticism of price gouging with a quote from an Eminem song. In a verse that now passes for public exchange, he tweeted, “And it seems like

the media immediately points a finger at me. So I point one back at em, but not the index or pinkie.”

Another instance of the culture of cruelty can be seen in the high-octane and unethical grammars of violence that now offer the only currency with any enduring value for mediating relationships, addressing problems, and offering instant pleasure in the larger culture. This is evident in the transformation of local police forces into SWAT teams, schools modeled after prisons, and the ongoing criminalization of social behaviors, especially of poor minority youth. Brute force and savage killing replayed over and over in various media platforms now function as part of an autoimmune system that transforms the economy of genuine pleasure into a mode of sadism that saps democracy of any political substance and moral vitality, even as the body politic appears to weaken itself by cannibalizing its own young. Needless to say, extreme violence is more than a spectacle for upping the pleasure quotient of those disengaged from politics; it is also part of a punishing machine that spends more on putting poor minorities in jail than educating them. As American society becomes more militarized, “civil society organizes itself for the production of violence.”¹⁸ As a result, the capillaries of militarization feed and mold social institutions extending across the body politic—from the schools to local police forces. In the United States, local police forces, in particular, have been outfitted with full riot gear, submachine guns, armored vehicles, and other lethal weapons imported from the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, reinforcing their mission to assume battle-ready behavior. Is it any wonder that violence rather than painstaking neighborhood police work and community outreach and engagement becomes the norm for dealing with alleged “thugs,” especially at a time when more and more behaviors are being criminalized?

The police in too many cities have been transformed into soldiers just as dialogue and community policing have been replaced by military-style practices that are way out of proportion to the crimes the police are trained to address. For instance, the *Economist* reported that “SWAT teams were deployed about 3,000 times in 1980 but are now used around 50,000 times a year. Some cities use them for routine patrols in high-crime areas. Baltimore and Dallas have used them to break up poker games.”¹⁹ Such egregious uses of police time and taxpayer dollars would appear idiotic if they weren’t so savage.

In the advent of the recent displays of police force in Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland, it is not surprising that the impact of the rapid militarization of local police on poor black communities is nothing short of terrifying and yet deeply symptomatic of the violence that takes place in authoritarian societies. For instance, Michelle Alexander exposes the racist

nature of the punishing state by pointing out that “there are more African American adults under correctional control today—in prison or jail, on probation or parole—than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began.”²⁰ When young black boys and girls see people in their neighborhood killed by the police for making eye contact, holding a toy gun, walking in a stairway, or selling cigarettes while “the financial elite go free for a bookmaking operation that almost brought the country to economic ruin,” not only do the police lose their legitimacy, but so do established norms of lawfulness and modes of governance.²¹

In terms reminiscent of Orwell, morality loses its emancipatory possibilities and degenerates into a pathology in which individual misery is denounced as a moral failing. Under the neo-Darwinian ethos of survival of the fittest, the ultimate form of entertainment becomes the pain and humiliation of others, especially those considered disposable and powerless, who are no longer objects of compassion but of ridicule and amusement. They populate the stories we are now hearing from U.S. politicians who disdain the poor as moochers who don’t need social assistance but stronger morals. Jeb Bush echoes this argument in his claim that if he were elected president, he wouldn’t be giving black people “free stuff,”²² as if black Americans are on welfare because they are lazy and are “plagued by pathological dependence.”²³ These narratives can also be heard from conservative pundits such as *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, who insists that poverty is a matter of the poor lacking virtue, middle-class norms, and decent moral codes.²⁴ For Brooks, the problems of the poor and disadvantaged can be solved “through moral education and self-reliance . . . high-quality relationships and strong familial ties.”²⁵

In this discourse, soaring inequality in wealth and income, high levels of unemployment, stagnant economic growth, and low wages for millions of working Americans are willfully covered over and covered up. What Brooks, Bush, and other conservatives consistently obfuscate is the racist nature of the drug war, police violence, the stranglehold of the criminal justice system on poor black communities, the egregious effect of “racially skewed patterns of mass incarceration,” mass unemployment for underserved youth, and poor-quality education in low income-neighborhoods.²⁶ Paul Krugman gets it right in rebutting the argument that all the poor need are the virtues of middle-class morality and a good dose of resilience.²⁷ He counters, “The poor don’t need lectures on morality, they need more resources—which we can afford to provide—and better economic opportunities, which we can also afford to provide through everything from training and subsidies to higher minimum wages.”²⁸

As the claims and promises of a neoliberal utopia have been transformed into an Orwellian nightmare, the United States continues to succumb to the

pathology of financial speculation, political corruption, the redistribution of wealth upward into the hands of the 1 percent, the rise of the surveillance state, and the use of the criminal justice system as a way of dealing with social problems. At the same time, Orwell's dark fantasy of an authoritarian future continues without enough massive opposition. Students, low-income whites, and poor minority youth are exposed to a low-intensity war in which they are held hostage to a future of low expectations, police violence, an atomizing consumer culture, a growing anti-intellectualism and religious fundamentalism in American society, corporate and government modes of surveillance, and the burden of extreme debt.

No democracy can survive the kind of inequality in which “the 400 richest people . . . have as much wealth as 154 million Americans combined, that's 50 percent of the entire country [while] the top economic 1 percent of the U.S. population now has a record 40 percent of all wealth and more wealth than 90 percent of the population combined.”²⁹ On a global scale, according to a study by antipoverty charity Oxfam, it reports that it expects “the wealthiest 1% to own more than 50% of the world's wealth by 2016.”³⁰ Within such iniquitous conditions of power, access, and wealth, a society cannot foster a sense of organized responsibility fundamental to a democracy. Instead, it encourages a sense of organized irresponsibility—a practice that underlies the economic Darwinism and civic corruption at the heart of a debased politics.

What role might education and critical pedagogy have in a society in which the social has been individualized, emotional life collapses into the therapeutic, and education is relegated to either a private affair or a kind of algorithmic mode of regulation in which everything is reduced to a desired measurable outcome? Feedback loops now replace politics and the concept of revolution is defined through the culture of measurement and efficiency.³¹ In a culture drowning in a new love affair with empiricism and data collecting, that which is not measurable—such as compassion, vision, the imagination, care for the other, and a passion for justice—wITHERS. In its place emerges what Francisco Goya called in one of his engravings, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monster*. Goya's title is richly suggestive, particularly about the role of education and pedagogy in compelling students to be able to recognize, as my colleague David Clark points out, “that an inattentiveness to the never-ending task of critique breeds horrors: the failures of conscience, the wars against thought, and the flirtations with irrationality that lie at the heart of the triumph of everyday aggression, the withering of political life, and the withdrawal into private obsessions.”³²

The tentacles of power (that are clumsily tucked behind the vacuous claims to democratic governance) manifest themselves in the rise of a

punishing state and a totalitarian paranoia in which everyone is considered a potential terrorist or criminal. How else do we explain the increasing criminalization of social problems such as homelessness and the failure of the poor to pay court costs, to say nothing of arresting students for trivial infractions such as doodling on a desk or throwing peanuts at a bus, all of which can land the most vulnerable in jail? In fact, I have long argued that there is a hard and soft war being waged against young people. The hard war is taking place in many schools, which now resemble prisons in light of their lockdown procedures, zero tolerance policies, metal detectors, and the increasing presence of police in the schools.³³

The soft war is the war of consumerism and finance. Partnered with a massive advertising machinery and variety of corporate institutions, the soft war targets all youth by treating them as yet another “market” to be commodified and exploited, while attempting to create a new generation of hyperconsumers. The soft war is waged by a commercial culture that commodifies every aspect of kids’ lives, while teaching them that their only responsibility to citizenship is to consume. A more subtle form of this type of repression burdens and normalizes them with a lifetime of debt and does everything possible to depoliticize them and remove them from being able to imagine a more just and different society. In the United States the average student graduates with a loan debt of \$27,000. Debt bondage is the ultimate disciplinary technique of casino capitalism to rob students of the time to think, dissuade them from entering public service, and reinforce the debased assumption that they should simply be efficient cogs in a consumer economy.

If neoliberal authoritarianism is to be challenged and overcome, it is crucial that intellectuals, unions, workers, young people, and various social movements unite to reclaim democracy as a central element in fashioning a radical imagination. Such action necessitates interrogating and rupturing the material and symbolic forces that hide behind a counterfeit claim to participatory democracy. This requires rescuing the promises of a radical democracy that can provide a living wage, quality healthcare for all, public works, and massive investments in education, child care, and housing for the poor, along with a range of other crucial social provisions that can make a difference between living and dying for those who have been relegated to the ranks of the disposable.

The growing global threat of neoliberal authoritarianism signals both a crisis of politics and a crisis of beliefs, values, and individual and social agency. One indication of such a crisis is the fact that the economic calamity of 2008 has not been matched by a shift in ideas about the nature of finance capital and its devastating effects on American society. Banks got bailed out, and everyday Americans who lost their houses bore the brunt of the crisis.

The masters of finance capital were not held accountable for their crimes, and many of them received huge bonuses paid for by American taxpayers. Matters of education must be at the heart of any viable notion of politics, meaning that education must be at the center of any attempt to change consciousness, not just the ways in which people think but also how they act and construct relationships to others and the larger world.

Politics is an imminently educative task, and it is only through such recognition that initial steps can be taken to challenge the powerful ideological and affective spaces through which market fundamentalism produces the desires, identities, and values that bind people to its forms of predatory governance. The noxious politics of historical, social, and political amnesia and the public pedagogy of the disimagination machine must be challenged and disassembled if there is any hope of creating meaningful alternatives to the dark times in which we live. Young people need to think otherwise in order to act otherwise, but in addition they need to become cultural producers who can produce their own narratives about their relationship to the larger world and what it means to sustain public commitments, develop a sense of compassion for others, locally and globally.

But the question remains regarding how a public largely indifferent to politics and often paralyzed by the need to survive, and caught in a crippling cynicism, can be moved from “an induced state of stupidity” to a political formation willing to engage in various modes of resistance extending from “mass protests to prolonged civil disobedience.”³⁴ This terrifying intellectual and moral paralysis must be offset by the development of alternative public spheres in which educators, artists, workers, young people, and others can change the terms of the debate in American culture and politics. Ideas matter, but they wither without institutional infrastructures in which they can be nourished, debated, and acted on. Any viable struggle against casino capitalism must focus on forms of domination that pose a threat to public spheres, such as public and higher education and the new media, that are essential to developing the critical formative cultures, identities, and desires that nourish modes of engaged thinking necessary for the production of critically engaged citizens.

If such a politics is to make any difference, it must be worldly; that is, it must incorporate a critical disposition that both addresses social problems and tackles the conditions necessary for modes of democratic political exchange that enable new forms of agency, power, and collective struggle. Until politics can be made meaningful in order to be made critical and transformative, there will be no significant opposition to casino capitalism.

I want to conclude by pointing to a few initiatives, though incomplete, that might mount a challenge to the current oppressive historical conjuncture

in which many Americans now find themselves.³⁵ In doing so, I want to address what I have attempted to map as a crisis of memory, agency, and education and reclaim what I call a pedagogy of educated hope that is central to any viable notion of change that I am suggesting.

First, there is a need for what can be called a revival of the radical imagination and the defense of the public good, especially higher education, in order to reclaim its egalitarian and democratic impulses. This call would be part of a larger project “to reinvent democracy in the wake of the evidence that, at the national level, there is no democracy—if by ‘democracy’ we mean effective popular participation in the crucial decisions affecting the community.”³⁶ One step in this direction would be for young people, intellectuals, scholars, and others to go on the offensive against a conservative-led campaign “to end higher education’s democratizing influence on the nation.”³⁷ Higher education should be harnessed neither to the demands of the warfare state nor to the instrumental needs of corporations. Clearly, in any democratic society, education should be viewed as a right, not an entitlement.

Politically, this suggests defining higher education as a democratic public sphere and rejecting the notion that the culture of education is synonymous with the culture of business. Pedagogically, this points to modes of teaching and learning capable of producing an informed public, enacting and sustaining a culture of questioning, and enabling a critical formative culture that advances at least in the schools what Kristen Case calls “moments of classroom grace.”³⁸ Pedagogies of classroom grace should provide the conditions for students and others to reflect critically on commonsense understandings of the world, and begin to question, however troubling, their sense of agency, their relationship to others, and their relationships to the larger world. This can be linked to broader pedagogical imperatives that ask why we have wars, massive inequality, a surveillance state, the commodification of everything, and the collapse of the public into the private. This is not merely a methodical consideration but also a moral and political practice because it presupposes the creation of critically engaged students who can imagine a future in which justice, equality, freedom, and democracy matter. In this instance, the classroom should be a space of grace—a place to think critically, ask troubling questions, and take risks, even though that may mean transgressing established norms and bureaucratic procedures.

Second, young people and progressives need to develop a comprehensive educational program that would include a range of pedagogical initiatives from developing a national online news channel to creating alternative schools for young people in the manner of the diverse democratically inspired schools such as Highlander under Miles Horton, the Workers College in New York, and a host of other alternative educational institutions. Such a

pedagogical task would enable a sustained critique of the transformation of a market economy into a market society along with a clear analysis of the damage it has caused both at home and abroad. What is crucial to recognize here is that it is not enough to teach students to be able to interrogate and critically screen culture and other forms of aural, video, and visual forms of representations. They must also learn how to be cultural producers. This suggests developing alternative public spheres such as online journals, television shows, newspapers, zines, and any other platform in which alternative positions can be developed. In addition, such tasks can be done by mobilizing the technological resources and platforms they already have. It also means working with one foot in existing cultural apparatuses in order to promote alternative ideas and views that would challenge the affective and ideological spaces produced by the financial elite who control the commanding institutions of public pedagogy in North America.

Third, academics, artists, community activists, young people, and parents must engage in an ongoing struggle for the right of students to be given a formidable and critical education not dominated by corporate values and for young people to have a say in the shaping of their education and what it means to expand and deepen the practice of freedom and democracy. Young people have been left out of the discourse of democracy. They are the new disposables who lack jobs, a decent education, hope, and any semblance of a future better than the one their parents inherited. Facing what Richard Sennett calls the “spectre of uselessness,”³⁹ they are a reminder of how finance capital has abandoned any viable vision of the future, including one that would support future generations. This is a mode of politics and capital that eats its own children and throws their fate to the vagaries of the market. The ecology of finance capital only believes in short-term investments because they provide quick returns. Under such circumstances, young people who need long-term investments are considered a liability. If any society is in part judged by how it views and treats its children, the United States by all accounts is truly failing in a colossal way.

Fourth, casino capitalism is so widespread that progressives need to develop a comprehensive vision of politics that “does not rely on single issues.”⁴⁰ It is only through an understanding of the wider relations and connections of power that young people and others can overcome uninformed practice, isolated struggles, and modes of singular politics that become insular and self-sabotaging. In short, moving beyond this single-issue orientation means developing modes of analyses that connect the dots historically and relationally. It also means developing a more comprehensive vision of politics and change. The key here is the notion of translation; that is, the need to translate private troubles into broader public issues and understand how systemic

modes of analyses can be helpful in connecting a range of issues so as to be able to build a united front in the call for a radical democracy.

This is a particularly important goal given that the fragmentation of the Left has been partly responsible for its inability to develop a wide political and ideological umbrella to address a range of problems: extreme poverty; the assault on the environment; the emergence of the permanent warfare state; the rollback of voting rights; the assault on public servants, women's rights, and social provisions; and other issues that erode the possibilities for a radical democracy. The dominating mechanisms of casino capitalism in both their symbolic and material registers reach deeply into every aspect of American society. Any successful movement for the defense of public goods and democracy itself will have to struggle against this new mode of authoritarianism rather than isolating and attacking specific elements of its antidemocratic ethos.

One important development is that black youth, among other concerned young Americans, are currently making real strides in moving beyond sporadic protests, short-lived demonstrations, and nonviolent street actions in the hopes of building sustained political movements. Groups such as Black Lives Matter, Black Youth Project, We Charge Genocide, Dream Defenders, and others represent a new and growing political force that is not only connecting police violence to larger structures of militarism throughout society but also reclaiming public memory by articulating a direct link “between the establishment of professional police systems in the United States [and] the patrolling systems that maintained the business of human bondage in chattel slavery.”⁴¹

Fifth, another serious challenge facing advocates of a new truly democratic social order is the task of developing a discourse of both critique and possibility or what I have called a discourse of educated hope. Critique is important and is crucial to break the hold of commonsense assumptions that legitimate a wide range of injustices. The language of critique is also crucial for making visible the workings of unequal power and the necessity of holding authority accountable. But critique is not enough, and without a discourse of hope, it can lead to a paralyzing despair or, even worse, a crippling cynicism. Hope speaks to imagining a life beyond capitalism and combines a realistic sense of limits with a lofty vision of demanding the impossible. As Ernst Bloch once insisted, reason, justice, and change cannot blossom without hope because educated hope taps into our deepest experiences and longing for a life of dignity with others, a life in which it becomes possible to imagine a future that does not mimic the present.⁴² I am referring not to a romanticized and empty notion of hope but to a notion of informed hope

that faces the concrete obstacles and realities of domination but continues the ongoing task of “holding the present open and thus unfinished.”⁴³

The discourse of possibility not only looks for productive solutions; it also is crucial in defending public spheres in which civic values, public scholarship, and social engagement allow for a more imaginative grasp of a future that takes seriously the demands of justice, equity, and civic courage. Democracy should encourage, even require, a way of thinking critically about education, one that connects equity to excellence, learning to ethics, and agency to the imperatives of social responsibility and the public good. Casino capitalism is a toxin that has created a predatory class of unethical zombies—who are producing dead zones of the imagination that even Orwell could not have envisioned—all the while waging a fierce fight against the possibilities of a democratic future. The time has come to develop a political language in which civic values, social responsibility, and the institutions that support them become central to invigorating and fortifying a new era of civic imagination, a renewed sense of social agency, and an impassioned international social movement with a vision, organization, and set of strategies to challenge the neoliberal nightmare engulfing the planet. These may be dark times, as Hannah Arendt once warned,⁴⁴ but they don’t have to be, and that raises serious questions about what educators, artists, youth, intellectuals, and others are going to do within the current historical climate to make sure that they do not succumb to the authoritarian forces circling American society, waiting for the resistance to stop and for the lights to go out. History is open, and as Howard Zinn once insisted, hope is the willingness “to hold out, even in times of pessimism, the possibility of surprise.”⁴⁵

NOTES

1. This theme is taken up powerfully by a number of theorists. See C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Norton, 1974); Zygmunt Bauman, *In Search of Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); and Henry A. Giroux, *Public Spaces, Private Lives* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

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5.2 Chapman Democracy Activist Offers a Radical Critique of Capitalism

Interview with Peter McLaren

JONATHAN WINSLOW

Peter McLaren is the codirector of Chapman University's Paulo Freire Democratic Project and the university's international ambassador for global ethics and social justice. He also happens to be one of the world's foremost thinkers on critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is a cross-section between philosophy and education that works to equip students to identify oppression in the world and deal with it in a constructive manner. McLaren has written and edited nearly fifty books in his field.

Once an elementary and middle school teacher in Canada, McLaren taught at a comfortable school in a comfortable neighborhood until one day he had a troubling thought: social class is one of the biggest predictors of success, and it was entirely likely that those students could succeed not because of their teachers—but, perhaps, even in spite of them. McLaren decided to go somewhere where he could have a more profound effect—the inner city.

While others may have been content with helping at least one of their students, McLaren set higher standards—he wanted to make a difference for everyone. He found a bond with his students that his colleagues didn't seem to have. At one point, he cleared everything out of his classroom and filled it with drums instead. Rather than teaching the course material, he drummed and connected with his students. Test scores actually went up.

This was the beginning of McLaren's path of social justice. Today, he encourages critical analysis, especially of capitalism. Inspired by his mentor Paulo Freire, one of the fathers of critical pedagogy, McLaren strives to equip students with the means to make sense of their experiences and look critically at the world, possibly opening the door to a better system.

McLaren's latest book, *Pedagogy of Insurrection*, was published in 2015. In this book, McLaren draws on his background as a devout Catholic, looking at the teachings of Jesus as they relate to capitalism. In what he expects to be a controversial move, he argues that Jesus was effectively preaching communism, and that his message of love might open the way to a better ethical approach to social justice in modern times.

We sat down with McLaren to gain some insight on his theoretical work.

Q. Just for starters, how exactly would you describe critical pedagogy?

A. I think that most people mistake critical pedagogy with critical thinking. It's part of it, but you can't reduce critical pedagogy to critical thinking.

Critical pedagogy has an ethical foundation. You can't move from fact to value; there's no logical sequence that will take you from a critique of capitalism to say that capitalism, therefore, is a bad thing. That requires an ethical judgment. For me, critical pedagogy is a philosophy of praxis. *Praxis* is an interesting term—it's the dialectical relationship between theory and practice.

Q. What are some of the key ideas you discuss in your books and talks?

A. Praxis relates to changing the world. For me, in changing the world, I name what the problem is. For me, that problem is capitalism—the production of value. Now, value and wealth are very different. Value is monetized wealth.

In my work in Latin America and with poor communities all around the world, I've come to the realization that critical pedagogy requires an ethical commitment. That ethical commitment is to eliminate unnecessary, needless suffering. That's a moral posture that one takes. Liberation theology calls this a preferential option for the poor. I go farther than that; I say it's not a preferential option but an obligation.

Critical pedagogy is mobilized toward finding a more humane alternative to capitalism. Some critics will say that capitalism isn't perfect, but it's the best system we have so we can just try to make it better. It's the nature of capitalism itself—the alienation of human labor, the exploitation of human labor through profit making—that makes it impossible to reform.

Now, I'm not suggesting that we give any credibility to Soviet communism or Eastern Bloc police states; they were horrible regimes that misunderstood, manipulated, and misused the writings of Marx. So where do we look? Well, we can look at the Spanish Civil War, the Paris Commune and we can look at indigenous communities throughout Latin America like the Zapatistas. My emphasis is on encouraging teachers to be public intellectuals—to assume that role, not of being a clerk of the empire. Not to be a functionary

of the school board but to become transformative, critical, revolutionary thinkers who take a public stand on the issue of social justice. This notion of professors and teachers assuming a political neutrality is a falsehood because if you don't speak out, that's take a political position itself.

Q. Critical pedagogy is meant to instill change, but from where does that change come?

A. I take a dialectical approach. It's not simply revolution or reform; it's both. Dialectics is about mediation; mediation is not about juxtaposition. It's not "either or"; it's "both and."

There's an abstract utopia and a concrete utopia. Abstract utopias are when somebody has some idea in their mind of what a perfect world would look like, and it's sometimes very disconnected from what's actually happening on the ground at the time. Concrete utopias are related to the problems people are facing in the here and now. You do what you can within the system and have a larger, broader vision of where you want to go. Change begins with a critical consciousness but also with a moral and ethical commitment. Join a church group, a community group, a group connected with public libraries, the university or a high school. Get involved; make a commitment to people and change.

Critical consciousness isn't a precondition; it's an outcome of that engagement. Otherwise, you could always say you're not ready. There's always another book or philosopher to read, and it delays you from taking action. Begin with the action, and use the theory to refine your thoughts about that engagement.

Q. In your latest book, you look critically at capitalism through an interesting lens—the teachings of Jesus. How do you connect these two?

A. In examining the gospels and statements by Jesus, it became very clear to me that, while Jesus was not against absolute wealth, he was against relative wealth or what we call "differentiating wealth." That is to say, you cannot be rich while someone else is poor. It became very clear through his sayings, or what have been attributed to him, it's irrefutable that a rich person cannot get into heaven. The kingdom of God is really a kingdom in which differentiating wealth does not exist.

We could make an argument that Jesus was teaching communism. Not the communism that came as a specter, the totalitarian dictatorships we saw with Stalin—I would not want to defend them and would never call those regimes "communist." I mean the notion of sharing resources. The early Christian communities came together to share what they had. "It's

easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God.” Those statements are not about greedy people; they’re statements about society. Today, how we organize our means of production overdetermines the opportunities that some people have over others.

Capitalism structurally instantiates inequality. Jesus equated love with the struggle for equality. Love and justice are the two main messages of Jesus. If you read the scriptures, Jesus preached a socialist gospel. To see socialism among right-wing evangelical Christians as a kind of evil, it’s absolutely absurd. That’s largely a position I think stems out of ignorance about what socialism is and what communism was in the writings of Marx.

I’m trying to begin a debate because I feel that debate is very important. I’m beginning to inform critical pedagogy’s ethics of social justice by drawing on the teachings of Jesus.

Q. Historically, many thinkers with dreams of changing the world become disillusioned as they grow older. You’re now approaching your seventies, and your passion is burning brighter than ever. What keeps you going?

A. I think it’s a certain sense of being blessed. My life’s been an uphill struggle. Being on this path isn’t easy. I don’t know if you’ve read on the Internet about the “Dirty Thirty,” but I was hit by the Right in 2006. I was labeled by a right-wing group with a lot of money behind it as one of the most dangerous professors at UCLA. This group was offering students \$100 to secretly audiotape my classes and \$50 for notes. The only group that stood up and defended me at the time was the Chavistas in Venezuela. Taking the social justice route can make you a target for right-wing critics who feel you’re against the fundamental principles of the country.

It’s always been a struggle, but I’ve felt I’ve been blessed in my life with the opportunity to meet people from all over the world. I’ve found a love and a sense of solidarity, a sense of reciprocal relationship based on trust and a shared commitment to make the world a better place. The groups I’ve met and the suffering I’ve seen have humbled me because it makes my suffering and personal struggles pale in comparison. I’ve met some pretty courageous people that have inspired me, that have a commitment and energy that far exceeds my own. Meeting my wife, Angie, has been a blessing, and so has having an opportunity to be at an institution like Chapman, working with students and being in a position to learn.

I’m not optimistic about the future, but I’m hopeful. I don’t mean hope in the facile sense; I mean hope as a struggle—as a form of taking on yourself the burden of history and knowing that burden is being shared by others.

Knowing you're not alone and that you're driven by a love of humanity. You can't be a revolutionary without loving people. I'm a people person, I guess. Some people call me naïve, but I haven't given up on humanity yet.

NOTE

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5.3 Neoliberal Globalization and Resistance in Education

The Challenge of Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy

CONSTANTINE SKORDOULIS

In this chapter, I describe the effects of neoliberal globalization on education and the response of revolutionary critical pedagogy. In my analysis, the terms *globalization* and *neoliberalism* are interconnected and considered as pivotal in a course of commodification of education—namely, the subordination of education to the rules of the capitalist market.

In my view, the term *globalization* is nothing more than an ideological construction that is an attempt to give a neutral description of a fundamental feature of capitalism that has already been described by E. Mandel in his *Late Capitalism*¹—that is, the internationalization of capital and of the exploitative relations under the capitalism of multinationals.

Globalization is accompanied by neoliberal policy, in effect creating conditions of class war, aiming to increase the profitability of capital at the expense of the oppressed classes dismantling labor relations, halting and reversing the gains of the working class worldwide.

Neoliberal policy is accompanied by an unprecedented ideological offensive at the level of theory. Typical of this is the use of seemingly neutral terms that indicate deep reactionary meanings. The aim is the imposition of the ideological hegemony of bourgeois policy and the theoretical disarmament of the exploited classes but most importantly is the development of a consensus system inclusive of the agents of social resistance.

I believe it is extremely important to highlight and thoroughly analyze the neoliberal policy enforcement mechanism in education in national educational systems. This role has been undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). An important part of this ar-

ticle discusses how PISA homogenizes the education systems of the OECD country members.

I consider it important that in addition to the analysis, we should also outline an alternative proposal, not only in terms of an overall alternative economic policy to neoliberalism but particularly at the level of education. Today, the only coherent proposal against the effects of globalization on education comes from the proponents of revolutionary critical pedagogy.

In this chapter, I outline the prospects of resistance that the anticapitalist/socialist teachers' movement inspired by the theoretical accomplishments of revolutionary critical education.

NEOLIBERAL POLICY IN EDUCATION

The main objective of neoliberal policy in education is the transformation of education to another services-providing sector, ultimately a source for increasing the profitability of capital.

The attempted restructuring of labor relations, of the health and education sectors that we witness worldwide, aims to destroy the pillars of the welfare state as expressed by the right to work, education, and health and to replace it with a state that is nothing more than a regulator for the profitability of capital at the expense of the weaker social classes.

Against the neoliberal and neoconservative restructuring of education, we must propose a different policy, to set up a framework of positions aiming to reverse the neoliberal armageddon in education. In this direction the answer to the question of the role of education under capitalism has always been of paramount importance.

The theoretical legacy of classical Marxism guides our position that society shapes education in accordance to the needs of the social classes that hold power. From the standpoint of the ruling class, the main role of education is to reproduce the dominant ideology. Here is part of the view of education as ideological apparatus of the state (ISA).² The reproduction of the dominant ideology involves the distortion of reality, preventing the development of critical knowledge by students and the critical understanding of the reality of the natural and social worlds around them.

But another reproduction process takes place simultaneously. The "education industry" is a significant state apparatus in the reproduction and replication of the capitalist social form necessary for the continuation of "surplus value" extraction and economic inequality,³ so a process of reproduction of the existing exploitative social relations through the enhancement of the contradiction between manual and intellectual labor takes place.

Nowadays neoliberalism has entered a new stage. The educational policy of neoliberalism aims to proletarianize intellectual labor by creating conditions by which education will no longer be a springboard for social advancement but a passport for the creation of an army of flexible employees. This is achieved through the following:

1. the social devaluation of the teaching profession
2. the intervention in the curriculum such that skills come into the foreground and scientific knowledge (understanding by the methods of science) is secondary

In accordance with the argument developed here, G. Rikowski has suggested that the capitalist state needs to control the social production of labor power for two reasons:

1. to try to ensure that the social production of labor power—equipping students with skills and competences—occurs
2. to try to ensure that modes of pedagogy that are antithetical to labor power production *do not and cannot exist*. The capitalist state will not tolerate any forms of pedagogy *that attempt to educate students regarding their real predicament—to create an awareness of themselves as future labor powers and to underpin this awareness with critical insight that seeks to undermine the smooth running of the social production of labor power*⁴

This policy, despite neoliberal manifestations for “freedom of choice,” entails a strict control of the curriculum for teacher education, of schooling, and of educational research.

My longtime friend and comrade Dave Hill has argued that neoliberal policy in education compresses and represses critical space in education, seeking to neutralize and destroy potential pockets of resistance to global corporate expansion and neoliberal capital questioning the role of the school in maintaining and deepening social stratification, which is what neoliberalism pursues.⁵

Knowledge Society

Reading the various official documents of the World Bank, the OECD, and the European Union (EU), we see that they start with the premise that we live in a “knowledge society.” This premise is in fact the preamble to their education policy proposals.

What actually is the “knowledge society”? In essence it is the integration of knowledge in the production process as a direct productive force, as a key factor in the profitability of capital. This new production format aims to recover the permanent and structural crisis of the capitalist system, which tries to overcome the crisis through continuous technological revolutions, using knowledge as a direct productive force.⁶

As mentioned before, the key feature of late capitalism is the proletarianization of intellectual labor. This means that the intellectual worker, such as a teacher, in the new context, enters the same level of exploitation as the manual worker. The degree of exploitation of intellectual-mental labor is at the same level with manual labor. In this phase of capitalism, the degree of exploitation of educational work is the same as the degree of exploitation of the worker in the factory. This is an essential feature of neoliberal capitalism and the way it is manifested in education.

Skills, Not Knowledge

The first thing someone can see in the plans and programs for the “new school” of neoliberalism is the question of development of students’ skills. The school curriculum should develop skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making. This separation between knowledge and skills and the primacy of skills versus knowledge was characteristic of the educational reform implemented by Margaret Thatcher in England in 1979. The first thing Thatcher did when her government designed the new curricula was to publish an educational manifesto titled “Skills, Not Knowledge.” This slogan constitutes the heart of the neoliberal attack on education, and the transformation of the curriculum is centered precisely at this point: the degradation of knowledge and the orientation toward skills in view of educating an adjustable flexible worker who will not have a permanent job and be prepared to change his or her job five to ten times during his or her working life. If so, it does not make sense to have concrete, solid knowledge, but the worker should develop specific skills, so as to be adaptable to changing working environment during his or her life. This package is also associated with lifelong learning (LLL). Lifelong learning means that education needs to give knowledge that constitutes not the identity of the knowing subject but specific skills instead, planning a flexible worker, springy to the working status and flexible in adapting to new working conditions through retraining.

At the same time, the aim is to infuse in the school curriculum and university education terms that may seem neutral but have a serious ideological load, to which, unfortunately, we have not given the importance they deserve. That is, there are seemingly neutral terms in educational policy documents

such as *quality* and *innovation*. In fact, terms such as these, when introduced in the schooling process, aim to integrate students and teachers in the logic of production of “innovative” ideas even at the curriculum level. And what begins at the school level will be later transformed through organized research into new knowledge that will be the locomotive to pull capitalism out of its crisis.

PISA AS AN INSTRUMENT OF THE OECD POLICY IN EDUCATION

A basic prerequisite for the success of neoliberal policy in education at the global level is the existence of a regulatory mechanism that will govern the application of neoliberal educational policy worldwide. This role has been undertaken by the OECD, and the tool used is PISA, a famous program that began in 2000, is applied every three years in all OECD countries, and evaluates students’ skills in language, mathematics, and natural sciences.

The OECD policy follows two main axes: homogenization of educational systems and promotion of competition among the participating countries. In the context of this policy, the question ceases to be about effective education, focusing instead on the position a country achieves in the ranking list of the education systems of OECD countries.

The logic of the OECD strategy supports an increased competitiveness combined with a procedure for establishing common criteria between the educational systems of countries, as this would be profitable for the capitalist market. In essence, the mobility in the labor market that shapes globalized capitalism requires homogenized qualifications and skills for the workers of all countries. The aim is to standardize the education systems of OECD countries. To achieve this objective, PISA follows the same method and procedure in all countries employing the same criteria without taking into account the national specificities of educational systems and the cultural specificities of each country. This raises a question of justice, not only for the validity and reliability of the results but also for the students tested. How fair is it for students to have to deal with issues of specific form and content that may never have been taught?

The questions asked in the PISA test are not based on the objectives and content of the curricula of the participating countries, because the OECD does not intend to evaluate the education system of each country. “It uses educational evaluation as a technical homogenization of educational systems and curricula through competition.”⁷

Countries participating in the program must align with PISA requirements, because their aim is to achieve the best position in the ranking lists of

education systems the OECD publishes. Within this framework, education systems and national curricula are gradually homogenized. These procedures do not stimulate discussion on improving educational systems in each country, since the interests of national educational policies are monopolized by the need to improve their image in the OECD list.

PISA exerts great influence on public opinion. Whenever the results of the program are announced, governments adopt an apologetic tone, newspapers find material to fill multiple columns, and teachers are puzzled and seek explanations for what is happening to their country's educational system.

A typical example of the influence of the PISA is the U.S. case. The program No Child Left Behind echoed the first results of PISA.⁸ Among other things, primary and secondary schools were put under a permanent evaluation process to decide on their financing. "The forces that determine the latest educational policies of the action 'No Child Left Behind' is neoliberal economic policies that push schools to perform like multinationals."⁹

Fortunately, PISA has raised serious criticism and objections about its nature and its reliability, also among nonradical educators, for a number of reasons:

- The topics chosen do not evaluate the crucial aspects of school and education but the specific aspects of neoliberal educational policy that it seeks to impose on the countries involved.
- PISA is conducted by private companies seeking a share in the growing market of tests and surveys.
- The interpretation of the PISA results are within a neoliberal conception of education and thus are necessarily partisan.

The logic of the OECD strategy supports competition combined with a system of common neoliberal standards for educational systems of the participating countries in the interest of the global capitalist market.

The OECD education policy makers and the government officials of different countries show a great interest in the results of PISA and the comparative indicators published because they believe that there is a direct correlation between the educational achievements of a country and its economic development. The OECD publication *Education at a Glance* states that "students who demonstrate high levels of performance are more likely to become productive workers when they leave the education system."¹⁰ Still, "In a world increasingly dominated by technology, knowledge and skills of students are central to the ability to compete in a global market."¹¹

However, the existence of a relationship between a country's performance in education and economic growth in capitalist terms is not at all obvious.

In various studies published to correlate statistically the results of student performance in international competitions like the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) tests with the economic development indicators of the country, research findings do not support this.

K. Robinson compared the results of the countries in the TIMSS tests with macroeconomic variables such as per capita gross national product.¹² He found an extremely weak relationship between them, which means that school performance is not directly reflected in the economy. G. S. Drori takes a similar position using the findings of the TIMSS tests to question the relationship between education and economic development.¹³ Drori suggests that it is important to take into account intermediate factors such as the nature of the national education system, educational infrastructure, different students' attitudes toward education, and differences in motivation of learning. And M. Uljens states explicitly that "the PISA-evaluations operate in order to promote the neoliberal interests of OECD. This is considered important as it appears often to be forgotten that OECD is the organization behind and running the PISA project."¹⁴ Indeed, in the neoliberal model, politics, economy, and education are considered mutually dependent. "This has created a dissonance in the 'school-state-market triangle' (education, politics, economics) which is clearest visible in and through the contemporary discussions on the crisis of citizenship and citizenship education."¹⁵

Even nonradical education theorists believe that PISA focuses on univariate comparative lists serving political rather than pedagogical interests. Critics have argued that "a scientific approach would contain pedagogical interpretation of how and why some countries lack certain skills and some other countries outweigh."¹⁶

The ranking lists of the countries in the various fields are easily readable by the general public, but nonexperts cannot interpret and properly use the data. Because PISA focuses on creating ranking lists of the participating countries and does not explain the differences between them, the interpretations are given by the countries, their ministries, and their mass media.

The classification of countries into lists nurtures competitiveness and favors the growing homogenization through a self-correcting process. So there is a policy framework within which we have to answer, and our answer has to be in terms of social class.

THE PEDAGOGY OF RESISTANCE

The classic book that highlights the position of Marxist critical educators on globalization in education is Peter McLaren and Ramin Farahmandpur's *Teaching against Global Capitalism and the New Imperialism: A Critical Peda-*

gogy.¹⁷ The authors' main goal is to strongly criticize economic globalization, especially its impact: global capitalism, postmodernity, cultural hybridization, and the "new imperialism." This critique is grounded in Marxist theory and as an alternative form of education offers what is called *revolutionary critical pedagogy*.

For McLaren and Farahmandpur, *globalization* is a misleading and euphemistic term that conceals the "ugly" face: imperialism and mainly cultural imperialism, the project of Western societies' unilateral supremacy and world domination, exploitation of labor, support for state terrorism, the militarization of space, the homogenization of media, and finally a capitalism that converts the natural environment into shopping center chains, aiming at short-term profits at the expense of ecological health and human dignity.

For the authors, postmodernist theories tacitly adopt the market economy, with a focus on cultural discourse and "hypersubjectivity," eventually falling victim to identity politics that characterize a "rough form of multiculturalism" and collapse in a liberal form.¹⁸

Specifically, they assert their position that in any form of education, "the Marxist analysis should serve as an axiomatic tool for contesting current social relations linked to the globalization of capital and the neoliberal educational policies that follow in its wake."¹⁹ However, they admit that "the Marxist theory is a social analysis system on human subjects and runs the little things of everyday life, so it should constantly be reviewed."²⁰

To achieve education that resists this new imperialism, for McLaren and Farahmandpur the priority is a Freireian, socialist pedagogy of the working class, which is also referred to as revolutionary multiculturalism, revolutionary practice active citizenship, or revolutionary critical pedagogy. We need revolutionary critical pedagogy, they say, because what we now call critical pedagogy has to do more than to critique the daily commodity logic of capital. It has to build a new vision of society, freed from the law of value.

To promote a revolutionary act, critical pedagogy must be able to support the cultural struggle of the workers and to coordinate such struggles as part of a cross-border association of social movements, which in turn organize and support the working classes and the marginalized cultural workers in their efforts to conduct new international anticapitalist struggles on the path to socialism.²¹ McLaren and Farahmandpur summarize these pedagogical positions with the observation that "we need nothing less than a social revolution."²²

There are, of course, Marxists who partly disagree with these positions.²³ They say it is not clear, within the theoretical framework of revolutionary critical pedagogy, how it addresses the issue of diversity exemplified as racial or class or gender or sexuality discrimination, among others.

Eventually, however, Marxist educators seem to agree that a global anti-capitalist education is possible, but to achieve it, we need to formulate a new, completely different radical conception of what is *boundary*, what is *educational*, and what is *globalization*. Such an understanding must be grounded on Marxism and the class struggle and must always aim at social revolution.²⁴

For Marxist educators, the axes for a revolutionary policy in education in the context of globalization are structured as follows: critique of the existing system, alternative educational objectives, and training for changing the world.

Radical educators argue that we have to put the classroom and the school at the center of a complex network of learning and help to create a new popular culture on education. This means that students should be provided with alternative interpretations of how and why things happen as they happen.²⁵

In the dialectical view of education, critical thinking is key, but critical thinking needs imagination, through which students and practicing teachers envision a new social reality.²⁶ Radical educators dealing with how to acquire critical knowledge and understanding focus on education for all citizens, as members of a fairer society. Under this concept, there is no distinction between the education of children and that of adults (as opposed to the concept of childhood in bourgeois pedagogues); instead, a more long-term training strategy is required, a new education in general, characterized by some major policy issues.

The main objectives of such a training strategy would be providing public education before and during work-life serving all citizens throughout their lives, promoting a democratically controlled and accountable education at all levels, and applying principles of equality and nondiscrimination in all segments of its operation.²⁷ Also, any discrimination in providing education or training to any group of people in terms of age, race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, or physical and mental ability or disability should be declared illegal.

We consider that the following proposal summarizes a Marxist-oriented universal education taking up successfully both the issues of sustainability as well as that of social justice:

Every person and every social group will be experiencing education as something that contributes to his/her own progress, but at the same time, education should ensure that at least a part of the activities of life are planned to ensure the future of the planet we inherited. . . . [D]emocracy is possible if there is a free public debate related to the options available on how to manage our social and economic system. . . . All societies are struggling for the same issues. Today we can

eliminate poverty . . . overall. We can approach the future investing in a massive campaign encouraging everyone to participate in every stage of his/her life in education and training. An education that increases the productive, social, cultural and environmental development in ways that we have not yet begun to envision even.”²⁸

CONCLUSION

I think, if we are to formulate a concrete proposal, we should not dwell only on the theoretical achievements of revolutionary critical pedagogy as it evolved into the second decade of 2000. We should be more specific and examine the proposals made so far in terms of the content of the curricula by the so-called societies in transition.

I refer here to specific examples. A few years ago, Venezuela implemented educational reform under Cesar Chávez. For this issue, there was intense debate in the circles of the Latin American Left, because it became clear that the reform in Venezuela started from the top down, unlike the Zapatista model, which was launched in Chiapas serving directly the needs of the community. This is a big debate that has been and continues to be important as to what we want and how we want to change education.

Of course, the international experience in this kind of experiment is extremely rich—for example, the experiments of the Soviet Polytechnic School and Adult and Workers Education in Red Vienna, in the period 1919–1934, which have not received the research attention they deserve, and a number of other efforts, such as the campaign for literacy in Nicaragua, which many of us watched too closely.

In general, I think that at the level of developing an analysis of the dominant neoliberal project in education, our contributions are solid, but at the level of developing an alternative curriculum, a teaching method in the classroom, we have to go a few steps further. In the current conditions of global, unregulated market dominance, this requires a deepening of our Marxist approach in close connection with the social movements of resistance.

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5.4 Transformative Education, Critical Education, Marxist Education

Possibilities and Alternatives to the Restructuring of Education in Global Neoliberal Times

DAVE HILL

Teachers, both university/higher education teachers and schoolteachers, are among the most highly organized and unionized groups of workers, and sometimes the most militant. I have written elsewhere of the various arenas in which Marxist and critical educators can be, are, and should be active—within the limits of individual capabilities and strengths, of course. These arenas are (1) within the classroom; (2) within the wider school community/organization, such as the staffroom and the union branch; (3) within the local community/town/city—for example, in tenants’ or benefits’ or antiracist or antiausterity or other local community organizations and movements—and within town- or citywide political parties, social movements, and trade unions; and (4) at national levels within such movements, parties, and organizations.

I point to these arenas for transformative political social and educational activism, since education—whether transformative or reproductive, whether revolutionary, reformist, conservative, or reactionary—takes place without/outside formal schooling and education systems as well as within.

RESISTANCE, CRITICAL AND MARXIST EDUCATION, CRITICAL AND MARXIST EDUCATORS

Critique, dissent, and transformation are not easy. Critical Marxist educators engage in critique that frames educational experiences within the conditions of capitalism and its current neoliberal and neoconservative form. And, I would add, they and we should also do so, recognizing its increasingly repressive neoconservative form, whether couched in terms of religion (Hindutva, fundamentalist Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or mainstream Christianity), fascist/Nazi thuggery, or increased repressive tactics and weaponry used by the police. The political context in different states from India to Turkey, from the United States to the United Kingdom, from Ukraine to Greece, shows the different faces of and interrelationships between calls to religion, armed racist/neo-Nazi thugs and murderers, and chemically treated water cannons used by the police. And, as ideological state apparatuses,¹ schools and universities have a repressive function with repressive surveillance, punishment, and

new public managerialist mechanisms and measures to dissuade, and punish, “deep dissent” and “deep critique.”

However, either quietly or openly, in schools, colleges, and universities, many radical and Marxist critical educators try to affect four aspects of learning and teaching, asking questions about (at least) four aspects. These questions are common to many types of radical educators, not simply Marxists. In the following sections I discuss what is *specifically Marxist* about these four questions.

PEDAGOGY

Some critical educators question the teacher-centered *pedagogy*, the pattern of teaching and learning relationships and interaction, what Paulo Freire termed the *banking model* of education. Instead, using Freirean perspectives and praxis, they try to use democratic participative pedagogy that can break down, to some extent, patterns of domination and submission and listens to children’s, students’, and local communities’ voices. This is no uncritical, postmodernist, or liberal, uncritical acceptance of polyvocality. As Peter McLaren in his postmodern phase put it, attempting to develop a resistance or Marxist postmodernism accepting metanarratives of class, capital, or the labor-capital relation (an attempt that he subsequently recognized as unattainable) “always totalizes.”²

Critical Marxist educators also attempt to use different types of pedagogy in teaching to engage in nonhierarchical, democratic, participative teaching and research. Such approaches are rooted in social constructivist Vygotskyan understandings of learning and are also aimed both at producing co-learning, by teachers as well as students, and at overtly welcoming and valuing more cultures than are commonly valued in a transmission mode of teaching. Lev Vygotsky, as a Marxist, was inspired by Marx’s dialectic in that it rejects top-down and bottom-up accounts of the learning process; these unidirectional models originate in class-based societal relations, which Marxists reject.

Of course, critiques of overdominant teacher-centered pedagogy are not restricted to Marxist educators. They are also made by liberal-progressive, child/student-centered educators; anarchist educators; and some conservative educators concerned about teaching effectiveness and preparation for the workplace. And, following Antonio Gramsci, Marxist teachers, by virtue of their role in teaching, should maintain an authoritative stance where appropriate.

But critical education is about far more than pedagogy. Indeed, it takes place outside schools and universities as well as inside, as the rise of alterna-

tives to the English university indicates. There is educational resistance not only within but also outside the state-controlled education structures. Marxist teachers, cultural workers, and intellectuals, are active within teach-ins at the Occupy occupations, their tent cities, the free university movement, and through oppositional media and cultural workers, as well as within trade union and student groups and political parties.

CURRICULUM

A second question Marxist and other critical educators can and should ask is about the *curriculum*—who selected the content and how rigid is it? Even where the curriculum is very tightly controlled, even where it is very rigidly prescribed, there are, as Gramsci taught us, always little spaces for us to infiltrate, to use, to colonize. These spaces—sometimes broad, sometimes narrow—exist in schools, prisons, youth clubs, universities, and vocational colleges and in tent cities, teach-ins and teach-outs, emergent alternatives, and various social media and even, occasionally, in official media.

Marxist educators, indeed critical educators in general, can, with students, look at the curriculum and ask, “Who do you think wrote this?” “Who do you think decided on including this in the curriculum?” “What do you/we think should be in the curriculum that is currently absent?” “Why do you think it is absent?” “Who do you think benefits and who loses from this curriculum?” “What is the ideology behind this book/task/lesson/curriculum piece?” These questions can be asked with ten-year-olds, sixteen-year-olds, forty-year-olds, or seventy-year-olds.

However limited the spaces are within a school, university, or educational site or within a curriculum, we can always find ways to question and encourage students to do this as well so that they are, in effect, developing an awareness of what can be called *ideology critique*.³ And then we can suggest and seek from students, an alternative, perhaps even if only for five minutes in a lesson or session. We can question existing versions of history. We can ask, “Is there a different version or view of the past, the present, or the future?” So, looking at the work of Marxist and communist teachers and critical educators, we can affect the content of curriculum, or, if that is impossible, we can seek to develop ideology critique, an understanding of the capital-labor relation, of capitalism and its relationship to education systems, of ideological and repressive state apparatuses, and of how schools and universities are shaped and controlled to produce politically and ideologically quiescent and hierarchically organized and rewarded labor power. Where Marxist educators and revolutionary critical educators⁴ differ from more social democratic and

liberal critical educators is in the emphasis placed on resistance and socialist transformation.⁵ Social democratic and liberal educators rarely suggest, teach about, or proclaim the need for an anticapitalist revolution, the need to replace capitalist economic and social relations with socialist ones.

ORGANIZATION OF STUDENTS

A third question in education that critical and Marxist educators can and should ask is about *organization of the students*. How should children of different social classes, genders, ethnic backgrounds, and sexual orientations be organized within classrooms, schools and universities, and national education systems? Are some groups, such as girls, ethnic minorities, the working class, or the poorer sections of the working class, systematically labeled, segregated, divided, demeaned?

In some countries, virtually all children go to the same *type* of school. But children tend to go to schools where their own class predominates. And this can be a problem. Some socialist municipalities (“local education authorities”) in England in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Sheffield and the ILEA (Inner London Education Authority, where I taught in a comprehensive secondary [high] school in the late 1960s), used measures such as “zoning” (drawing catchment areas for schools that deliberately included poor, average-income, and high-income urban areas) or taking a set proportion of students from what were called “ability” bands (in reality, “attainment” bands). But there is a clash of principles here, with no set Marxist solution—the clash between the deliberate mixing of attainment/ability bands or groups of students and a deliberate mixing of different social strata on the one hand, and a different principle of neighborhood schooling on the other.

In considering how students should be grouped between schools and within them, there is also a question of how the education system inculcates a differentiated sense of class awareness in working-, middle-, and ruling-class students. And it tries to keep the working class as a working class that is obedient, subservient, individualistic, and interested in only themselves, not in collectivity or community. Marxist and other egalitarian educators clearly prefer and work for what in Britain is called “comprehensive” schools, and in India, for example, is called “the common school.” But then, even where this happens (as in Finland, where there are only a handful of private schools, where students up to age sixteen are taught in common/comprehensive schools in “mixed ability” classes), there are internal informal mechanisms, the hidden curriculum of differential (raced, gendered, and sexually oriented) expectations and responses to different cultural capitals.⁶

OWNERSHIP, CONTROL, AND MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

A fourth question that Marxist and other critical educators ask is about *ownership and control of schools* (and, indeed, vocational colleges and universities). Who should own, control, and govern schools and further education at vocational colleges and universities? Of course we cannot change the law at a stroke, but we can lead a movement so that at some stage—in two years, ten years, twenty years—the ownership and governance of schools can be changed, made democratic, secular, and egalitarian, instead of, as in some countries, being owned and governed by a religious state, transnational corporations,⁷ religious organizations themselves, for-profit private companies, companies that are theoretically not-for-profit but reward handsomely their executives and their friends, or rich businessmen or women.

Marxist educators (and others, of course) believe that schools, colleges, and universities should be run democratically, with educators, students, and elected representatives of local communities having powers in and over those institutions, within a secular, democratic national framework. Explicit in this is the assertion that education is a public good and a public right that should not be distorted and corrupted by private ownership—there should be no private schools, colleges, or universities.⁸

A question related to who should own and control schools is that of how should they be managed—to put it crudely, should the management style be democratic, participative, and collegiate, or should it be authoritarian, top-down control? The global move to privatize state education (which has gone a long way in the United States and England) is a form of control and management of the workforce—of teachers, lecturers, school support, and administrative staff—known as *new public managerialism*—importing the huge differentials of pay, perks, and power typical of the private sector into the public sector, into education and other public services such as health and welfare and social services.

MARXIST EDUCATORS

What is specifically Marxist about these four questions is that while Marxists work for and willingly embrace reforms such as those that are implicit in the preceding criticisms, we are committed to three forms of analysis and action that social democrats, radical liberals, radical democrats, non-Marxist feminists, non-Marxist antiracists, and non-Marxist queer activists are not.

What defines Marxists is *first* our belief that reforms are not sustainable under capitalism and that therefore what is needed is a revolution to replace

the capitalist economic system with its capitalist economic relations of production and its capitalist social relations of production—the ownership by capitalists of the wealth and the power in society. Revolutions can be violent (ruling classes do not often give up their power peacefully), or they might be through the ballot box or a combination of the two. The ballot box alone cannot bring about revolution because state institutions in capitalism are not democratic. A Congress or parliament or president or prime minister has limited power over these institutions. An elected socialist government would not be able to bring about much change that went against the interests of the capitalist class because the military, judiciary, police, and corporate hierarchy are not democratic. They use state violence to stop it. This is the critique, for example, made by the Greek revolutionary Marxist coalition Antarsya of the radical Left Syriza coalition, which can be characterized as left social democratic, which is, by current projections (summer 2014), likely to be elected into government.⁹ But for revolutionary Marxists, a socialist revolution is necessary, so that there comes *into power* (not just *into government*) an egalitarian, socialist economic, political, and education system.

The *second* difference between Marxist and non-Marxist radicals is that in order to replace capitalism, Marxists have to organize. Thus a Marxist's duty is to be an activist, within the limits of his or her ability and competing demands, and to recognize that political organization, program development, and political intervention are necessary. Revolutions do not fall off trees, like apples. They have to be fought for and defended.

The *third* point is the *salience of class* as compared with other forms of structural oppression and discrimination and inequality. Marxists, Marxist feminists, Marxist antiracists, and Marxist queer theorists stand together with social movements and civil rights campaigners in opposing racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination. But Marxists go further than criticizing (and acting against) social discrimination and oppression into economic rights—and further than that, into the recognition that full economic rights cannot be achieved under a capitalist economic system but only under a socialist or communist system.

Furthermore, Marxists understand that only the organized working class (black-white, male-female, straight-LGBT, Dalit and all other castes) can organize to replace the capitalist system. These are the points of difference between Marxists and other radical liberals and leftists.

A SOCIALIST MANIFESTO FOR EDUCATION

In this section I itemize twenty-one policy aspects and proposals rooted in the analysis I have set out. Many of these are supported by a variety of social

democratic, liberal, and social justice ideologies, teachers, and citizens. But together they offer a sustained challenge to neoliberal capitalism. The extent to which they may offer a fundamental challenge to capitalism itself as opposed to the current neoliberal-neoconservative phase of capitalism (what Trotsky termed a “transitional program”) is a matter for debate.

But first, I wish to acknowledge that to propose educational theories, we must always recognize the restrictions placed on us during that process. As Stephen Toulmin puts it, “Until the basic empirical or experimental facts are established, we are not in a position to develop theoretical explanations. Till then the pursuit of theoretical generalizations is premature.”¹⁰ It is fruitful, following such analysis, to engage at a normative level of what should happen in schools and in an education system. This is not independent of what does happen. The normative section that follows has been preceded by a factual analysis of the history, structure, content, functioning, and features of compulsory state schooling and education systems.

Here I present a program or manifesto for education, for discussion.¹¹

1. Cut class sizes to a maximum of twenty students in both primary and secondary schools. In England, for example, many classes in primary (elementary) schools have more than thirty pupils—some of the largest in the rich world—much larger than in private schools, for example. According to OECD research, England is twenty-third out of thirty developed countries in terms of large class size. Other countries such as Finland have a maximum class size of twenty. Finland is widely seen as providing an extremely high quality of education. In countries with a lower GDP, of course, class sizes of fifty to a hundred are not uncommon.

2. Abolish league tables and most externally set assessment tasks. Some external testing is necessary, but the types of regular tests of factual knowledge typical of the United States and England (termed “high-stakes testing”) often restrict teaching to “teaching to the test,” relegates nonfactual learning to the sidelines, and results in undue stress.

3. Restore local democratic control of state schools that have been handed over to private corporations, charities, and individuals to run, and establish local democratic control of such schools. In England and Wales such schools are known as *academies*; in the as the United States they are called *charter schools*. In addition, England has state-funded *free schools* run by specific groups, often sectional groups of parents. Schools should be run by the democratically elected local councils/municipalities and operate under national pay and conditions agreements for those who work within the institutions. Rich businesspeople,

religious organizations, or “educorporations”/private companies running a chain or brand of school should not be handed control of state-funded schools such as academies or charter schools. Also, such preprivatizing pet projects of governments should not be more advantageously funded than the rest of the state schools. The added investment that governments put in to prime their favored experiments should be kept and enhanced, *but* it should be distributed between all schools. Our schools and the children in them are not for sale! Schools should not, through uneven funding for different types of school (e.g., academies), be set up for success at the expense of others being set up (and underfunded) for relative failure.

4. *Form a fully comprehensive secondary school system (known in India as a common school)* so that each school has a broad mix of social class, abilities, and attainment levels.

5. *Get private profiteering out of our schools.* Education services that have been privatized and hived off and had their contracts given to private profiteers should be brought back into public control. These include England’s Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted), the body that runs student loans, school meals, cleaning, and caretaking. This is so that proper pay and conditions can be restored to workers whose jobs have been contracted out, and so that school and university workers who work under contract can feel that they are part of the school, college, or university community. Students and school workers who are protesting further privatization should be supported.

6. *Integrate existing private schools into the state education system* so that the benefits of the private school system are shared among all students. All schools should be placed under democratic, locally elected, local council control. Private schools should be prohibited. Religious groups of any religion should not be allowed to control and run schools. Say no to big business/private capital running our schools and children.

7. *“Faith schools” and organized religion should be removed from schools.* If Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, or members of any religion wish to teach religion, they should do it on their own time, at their own places of worship (Saturday/Sunday schools), or in their own supplementary or complementary schools. Ethics, spirituality, and world religions can be taught, but there should be no indoctrination or brainwashing. A critical approach should be taken toward religion, recognizing its social and personal functions but also its political functions.

8. *Ensure a good, local school for every child.* Surplus space means lower class sizes and increased community use of school facilities.

9. *Make available free, nutritious, balanced school meals for every child* to combat poor diets, obesity, and, for some children, actual hunger.

10. *Restore free adult education classes* in pastime and leisure studies as well as in vocational training/studies.

11. *Restore or establish free, state-funded residential centers and youth centers/youth clubs* for schoolchildren so they can widen their experiences of life in safe circumstances and enhance their education beyond the confines of the home or city.

12. *Free up curricula that are overprescriptive* so there can be more creativity and cross-subject/disciplinary work.

13. *Revise inspectorial and surveillance systems such as (in England) Ofsted.* The results of school inspection systems such as Ofsted in England are to penalize even the best schools (outstanding in every aspect other than in SAT attainments)¹² in the poorest areas and to strike fear into teachers. However, some external supervision and inspection is necessary in extreme cases—for example, to make sure there are no “ghost schools”—that is, to make sure that schools actually exist—and to keep some oversight of school performance across a range of criteria, a range wider than attainment in tests.

14. *Encourage critical thinking* across the curriculum. Teach children not what to think, but how to think. Teach about Marxist analysis and the class-exploitative nature of capitalism. Such critical thinking should include how to think critically about the media and politicians and also about Marxist analysis. Critical analysis should be self-critical.

15. *Teach in schools ecological literacy and a readiness to act for environmental justice as well as economic and social justice.* Encourage children to reach for the stars and to work for a society that lets that happen—a fairer society with more equal chances, pay packets, and power—and teach them about environmental and sustainability issues.

16. *Ensure that schools are antiracist, antisexist, and antihomophobic—*making sure schools encourage equality and welcome different home and group cultures. As part of this, antibullying practices in every school must be

fully implemented to combat bullying of all sorts, including racism, sexism, homophobia, and bullying based on disabilities, caste, and socioeconomic class. Antibullying policies should also be part of the formal curriculum.

17. *Implement an honest sex education curriculum* in schools that teaches children not just when to say no but also when to say yes. This program should focus on positives, pleasure, and personal worth, not on stigmatizing sex and sexuality.

18. *Ensure proper recognition of all school workers and no compulsory redundancies.* For teachers, secretarial and support staff, teaching assistants, food service assistants, and caretaking staff, there should be regular democratic workplace forums in every school. Regarding jobs, there should be no compulsory redundancies—any restructuring should be conditional on agreement with the trade unions.

19. *Set up of school councils that include students* to encourage democratic understanding, citizenship, social responsibility, and a welcoming and valuing of student voice.

20. *Broaden teacher education and training* to counter the negative effects of the technicization and detheorizing of teacher training (which was the result in England of the 1992/1993 Conservative reorganization of what was then called *teacher education*—subsequently retitled *teacher training*). Bring back the study and awareness of the social and political and psychological contexts of teaching, including an understanding of and commitment to challenge and overturn racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination, such as against working-class pupils.

21. *Establish a fully funded, publicly owned, and democratic education system from preschool to university.* Education is a right, not a commodity to be bought and sold. So there should be no fees, as in Scandinavia, Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia, where education up to PhD level is free. Say no to university or further education/vocational training fees. And bring in a living grant for students from less well-off backgrounds.

EDUCATE, AGITATE, ORGANIZE: A MARXIST ANALYSIS

We Marxists seek to serve and advance the interests of the working class. We, as teachers, as educators, are working class, too; we sell our labor power to

capitalists and to the apparatuses of the capitalist state, such as schools and universities. We have to consistently and courageously challenge the dominant ideology, the hegemony of the ruling class, the bourgeoisie, the capitalist class. We are in a battle for dominance of our ideas; there are “culture wars” between different ways of looking at/interpreting the world. We have to contest the currently hegemonic control of ideas by the capitalist state, schools, media, and their allies in the religions.

But the situation we face is not just an ideological war: it is also an economic class war, in which the social and economic conditions and well-being of the working class are threatened and undermined by the ruling class and its capitalist state.¹³ David Blacker goes even further and argues that contemporary and future capitalist onslaughts will result in deaths for “superfluous” workers and sections of the nonworking industrial reserve army (for example, the thirteen thousand extra deaths of elderly people in the winter months in the United Kingdom due to lack of affordable heating).¹⁴ If we sit and do nothing, if their ideas are not contested, then capitalism will continue to rule, to demean, to divide, to impoverish us and the planet.

At certain times and locations in history, the difference between the conditions of workers’ existence and what the media and the clergy say becomes so stark that workers’ subjective consciousness changes. This is particularly likely when workers with more advanced revolutionary consciousness bring about a widespread and more evenly distributed consciousness among the class as a whole.

In some countries, or in schools and universities faced by commodification and managerialism and preprivatization, the gap between the “official” ideology that “we are all in this together” and “there is no alternative” (to austerity) becomes so large that the ruling party, the ruling capitalist class, and capitalism itself lose legitimacy. And so, as in Greece, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, Brazil, Britain, and India, we Marxists are necessary in leading changes in class consciousness and organizing for the replacement of capitalism.

PROGRAM

In 1938, in “The Transitional Program,” Trotsky addressed the types of programs moving the discussion beyond the *minimum program* (minimum acceptable reforms, such as those to protect and improve existing rights and entitlements, such as rights at work and social and political rights) and the *maximum program* (socialist revolution, with the type of society ultimately envisaged by Marx, a socialist noncapitalist/postcapitalist society) that were

advanced by late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century social democrats and by communists of the third international and articulated a new type of program: the *transitional program*. Trotsky, with a distinct resonance to today's struggles, wrote:

The strategic task of the next period—prerevolutionary period of agitation, propaganda and organization—consists in overcoming the contradiction between the maturity of the objective revolutionary conditions and the immaturity of the proletariat and its vanguard the confusion and disappointment of the older generation, the inexperience of the younger generation. It is necessary to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demand and the socialist program of the revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Classical Social Democracy, functioning in an epoch of progressive capitalism, divided its program into two parts independent of each other: the minimum program which limited itself to reforms within the framework of bourgeois society, and the maximum program which promised substitution of socialism for capitalism in the indefinite future. Between the minimum and the maximum program no bridge existed. And indeed Social Democracy has no need of such a bridge, since the word socialism is used only for holiday speechifying. The Comintern has set out to follow the path of Social Democracy in an epoch of decaying capitalism: when, in general, there can be no discussion of systematic social reforms and the raising of the masses' living standards; when every serious demand of the proletariat and even every serious demand of the petty bourgeoisie inevitably reaches beyond the limits of capitalist property relations and of the bourgeois state.¹⁵

Trotsky continued:

Under the menace of its own disintegration, the proletariat cannot permit the transformation of an increasing section of the workers into chronically unemployed paupers, living off the slops of a crumbling society. The right to employment is the only serious right left to the worker in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is left

to the worker in a society based upon exploitation. This right today is being shorn from him at every step. Against unemployment, “structural” as well as “conjunctural,” the time is ripe to advance along with the slogan of public works, the slogan of a sliding scale of working hours. Trade unions and other mass organizations should bind the workers and the unemployed together in the solidarity of mutual responsibility. On this basis all the work on hand would then be divided among all existing workers in accordance with how the extent of the working week is defined. The average wage of every worker remains the same as it was under the old working week. Wages, under a strictly guaranteed minimum, would follow the movement of prices. It is impossible to accept any other program for the present catastrophic period. . . .

The question is not one of a “normal” collision between opposing material interests. The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization and ruin. The question is one of life or death of the only creative and progressive class, and by that token of the future of mankind. If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. “Realizability” or “unrealizability” is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery.¹⁶

CONCLUSION

The “decay, demoralization and ruin” Trotsky speaks of are for millions of workers—including the middle class—an everyday reality in the current era of capitalism, neoliberal capitalism, or immiseration capitalism. This immiseration is apparent through both rich and poor worlds. The organization and characteristics of the resistance to the depredations is a matter for strategic and tactical considerations, relating to the current balance (strength, organization, [dis]unity) of class forces in local and national contexts. What is clear, though, is that for Marxist activists and educators, it is not enough just to reform capitalism—welcome though reforms such as the minimum program are—or to actively campaign for and protect such reforms. Rather, our task is to replace capitalism with democratic Marxism. As teachers, as educators, as cultural workers, as activists, as intellectuals, we have a role to play. We must play it.

NOTES

This chapter is an expanded version of Dave Hill, “Transformative Education, Critical Education, Marxist Education: Possibilities and Alternatives to the Restructuring of Education in Global Neoliberal/Neoconservative Times,” in “Revolution and Education,” ed. Lilia Monzo and Peter McLaren, special issue, *Knowledge Cultures* 4, no. 6 (2016): 159–175; Dave Hill, “Transformative Education, Critical Education, Marxist Education: Possibilities and Alternatives to the Restructuring of Education in Global Neoliberal/Neoconservative Times,” in *Neoliberalism, Critical Pedagogy and Education*, ed. R. Kumar (London: Routledge, 2016), 68–87; Dave Hill, “From Deconstruction to Reconstruction: Critical Pedagogies, Critical Education, Marxist Education,” in *Proceedings of the IV International Conference on Critical Education: “Critical Education in the Era of Crisis,”* ed. G. Grollios, A. Liambas, and P. Pavlidis (Thessaloniki, Greece: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2015), 286–309, available at http://www.eled.auth.gr/documents/proceedings_%20iv_icce_volume%202_en.pdf; Dave Hill, “Class Struggle and Education: Neoliberalism, (Neo)-Conservatism, and the Capitalist Assault on Public Education,” in *Working for Social Justice Inside and Outside the Classroom: A Community of Teachers, Researchers, and Activists*, ed. N. McCrary and E. W. Ross (New York: Peter Lang, 2015), 139–156; and Dave Hill, “Fighting Neo-liberalism with Education and Activism,” *Philosophers for Change*, March 1, 2015, available at <https://philosophersforchange.org/2012/02/29/fighting-neo-liberalism-with-education-and-activism/>.

1. L. Althusser, “Ideology and State Apparatus,” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127–186.

2. P. McLaren, *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture: Oppositional Politics in a Post-modern Era* (London: Routledge, 1994).

3. D. Kelsh and D. Hill, “The Culturalization of Class and the Occluding of Class Consciousness: The Knowledge Industry in/of Education,” *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* 4, no. 1 (2006), available at <http://www.jceps.com/index.php?pageID=article&articleID=59>.

4. P. McLaren, *Capitalists and Conquerors: A Critical Pedagogy against Empire* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

5. Kelsh and Hill, “The Culturalization of Class”; C. Skordoulis and D. Hill, eds., “Introduction,” in *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Critical Education* (Athens, Greece: University of Athens, 2012).

6. D. Reay, “The Zombie Stalking English Schools: Social Class and Educational Inequality,” *British Journal of Education Studies* 54, no. 3 (2006): 288–307.

7. S. Ball, *Global Education Inc.: New Policy Networks and the Neoliberal Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 2012).

8. For attempts to address these various aspects of education, in developing a socialist policy for education, see D. Hill, “A Socialist Manifesto for Education,” *Socialist Resistance*, April 15, 2010, available at <http://socialistresistance.org/?p=905>.

9. Editors’ note: Syriza did, in fact, win the election.

10. S. Toulmin, “Knowledge as Shared Procedures,” in *Perspectives on Activity Theory*, ed. Y. Engeström, R. Miettinen, and R. L. Punamäki (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 61.

11. This is a development of Hill, “A Socialist Manifesto for Education.”

12. Editors’ note: This refers to the National Curriculum Assessment, carried out in primary schools in England and colloquially known as SATs. The abbreviation in the United States refers to the Scholastic Assessment Test.

13. F. Campagna, *The Last Night: Anti-work, Atheism, Adventure* (Alresford, UK: Zero Books, 2013).
14. D. Blacker, *The Falling Rate of Learning and the Neoliberal Endgame* (Alresford, UK: Zero Books, 2013).
15. L. Trotsky, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International: The Transitional Program," 1938, available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/tp/tp-text.htm#m>.
16. Ibid.

6 | Capitalist Culture and Cultural Production

It will take decades to overcome the infectious, paralyzing influence of bourgeois culture upon the proletariat in the old capitalist countries.

—Anton Pannekoek, *World Revolution and Communist Tactics*

It's true that it's within the realm of cultural politics that young people tend to work through political issues, which I think is good, although it's not going to solve the problems.

—Angela Y. Davis, PBS interview, 1997

6.1 The Revolution of Everyday Life

RAOUL VANEIGEM

The distance between those who possess the most and those who possess a small (if ever-increasing) amount has not shrunk; but the intermediate levels have multiplied and so to speak brought the two extremes, rulers and ruled, closer to the same mediocrity. To be rich nowadays means to possess a large number of impoverished objects.

Consumer goods tend to lose all use-value. Their nature is to be consumable at all costs, as witness the recent American fad for the “nothing box”—an object with no conceivable utility. And as General [Dwight David] Eisenhower explained in all candor, the present economic system can be rescued only by turning human beings into consumers, conflating them with the largest possible number of consumable values—which is to say non-values, empty, fictitious, abstract values. After being “the most precious kind of capital,” in [Josef] Stalin’s happy phrase, human beings must now become the most highly prized of consumer goods. Stereotyped images—movie star, poor person, communist, murderer-out-of-love, law-abiding citizen, rebel, bourgeois—are about to replace humanity with a punch-card system of categories arranged in accordance with an irrefutable robotic logic. Already the idea of “teenager” tends to identify buyers and what they buy, reducing their real variety to a still varied but circumscribed range of commodities (records,

guitars, Levi's, etc.). You are no longer as old as you feel or as old as you look but as "old" as what you buy. The time of production, of "time is money," is giving way to the time of consumption (in both the figurative and the material senses of the word), a time measured in terms of products bought, worn out, and thrown away—the time of that premature old age which is the eternal youth of trees and stones.

The theory of pauperization is strikingly confirmed today—not, as Marx expected, in terms of goods necessary for survival, since these, far from becoming scarce, have become more and more abundant, but rather in terms of survival itself, which is ever the enemy of real life. Modern comforts seemed at first to promise everyone a life richer even than the *dolce vita* of the feudal aristocracy. But in fact they turned out to be mere offshoots of capitalist productivity, offshoots doomed to premature old age as soon as the distribution system transformed them into nothing but objects of passive consumption. Working to survive, surviving by consuming and for the sake of consuming: the hellish cycle is complete. According to the logic of the-economy-rules, survival is both necessary and sufficient. This is the basic reality of the bourgeois era. But it is also true that a historical period based on such an antihuman reality must needs be a period of transition, an intermediate stage between the life genuinely lived, if less than transparently, by the feudal masters and the life that will be constructed rationally and passionately by masters without slaves.

In an economy driven by the production requirements of free-trade capitalism, wealth alone confers power and honor. As master of the means of production and of labor power, wealth ensures by extension, thanks to the development of productive forces and of consumer goods, that its owners enjoy a wealth of choice among the fruits of never-ending progress. But to the extent that this form of capitalism is transformed into an antithetical form, namely a state-planned economy, the prestige of the capitalist playing the market with his millions fades away, and with it the caricature of the pot-bellied, cigar-puffing merchant of human flesh. Today's managers draw their power from their organizing skills—even if computer technology already holds them up to ridicule by providing a model that they can never emulate. They are rich in their own right, certainly, but can they vaunt their wealth by having it signify the potential choices available to them? Can they build a Xanadu, maintain a harem, or cultivate *filles-fleurs*? Alas, no—for how could money retain its symbolic force when it is continually solicited and hampered by the imperatives of consumption? Under the dictatorship of consumption money melts away like snow in the sunshine, its significance passing to objects with more representational value—more tangible objects better adapted to the welfare state and its spectacle. The function of money

has surely already been sidelined by the market in consumer goods, which, duly wrapped in ideology, have become the true signs of power. Before long, money's only remaining justification will be the quantity of objects and useless gadgets it enables one to acquire and wear out at an ever-accelerating pace; only the quantity and the pace matter, for mass distribution and standardization automatically wipe out quality and rarity. The ability to consume faster and faster, to change your car, your drink, your house, your TV, or your girlfriend ever more frequently, is now the only index of how much power you can lay claim to in the social hierarchy. From the preeminence of blood to the power of money, from the preeminence of money to the power of novelties, Christian and socialist civilization has now attained its highest stage: a civilization of the prosaic and the trivial.

Purchasing power is a license to purchase power. The old proletariat sold its labor power in order to subsist; what little leisure time remained proletarians spent as best they could in conversation, arguments, tavern games, country matters, going on the tramp, festivity, and riot. The new proletariat sells its labor power in order to consume. When they are not too busy working themselves to death in hopes of a promotion, workers are invited to buy objects—a car, a suit and tie, some culture—that will signal their social rank. We have reached the point where the ideology of consumption becomes the consumption of ideology.

The system of commercial exchange has now come to govern all of people's everyday relations with themselves and with their fellows. Every aspect of public and private life is dominated by the quantitative.

The calculation of a human's capacity to produce or make others produce, to consume or make others consume, is the perfect concrete expression of the idea so dear to the philosophers (and so revealing as to their function) of *the measure of man*. Even the simple pleasure of a drive in the country is widely assessed in terms of miles on the clock, speeds reached and petrol consumed. Given the rate at which economic imperatives gobble up feelings, desires, and needs, and pay cash to corrupt them, people will soon be left with nothing but the memory of having once existed. History, in which we shall live retrospectively, will be our sole consolation for our condition of survival. How can real joy exist in a space-time that is measurable and continually measured? Not so much as a hearty laugh. At best, the dull satisfaction of the person-who's-got-his-money's-worth, and who exists by that standard. Only objects can be measured, which is why all exchange reifies.

The great ideologies quickly abandon faith for numbers. What is the nation? Today it amounts to a few thousand war veterans. And what is what [Karl] Marx and [Friedrich] Engels used to call "our party"? A few million voters and a few thousand bill-posters: a mass party.

In fact ideology's essence is drawn from quantity: ideas reproduced again and again in time (Pavlovian conditioning) and in space (once consumers take up the refrain). Ideology, the news media, and culture—all tend gradually to shed their content and become pure quantity. The less importance a news item has, the more it is repeated, and the more it distracts people from their real problems. We are a long way from the Big Lie of which [Joseph] Goebbels said that it was the easiest to swallow. Ideological hyperbole evinces equal conviction to pitch a hundred books, a hundred washing powders, a hundred political ideas, each of which it promotes in turn as far and away the best. Even in the ideological realm quantity is destroyed by quantity itself: conditioning is inevitably eroded by its self-contradictions.

Could this possibly open an avenue back to power of the qualitative, a power that can move mountains? Far from it: self-contradictory conditioning is prone to produce trauma, inhibition, or a radical refusal to be brainwashed further. True, ideology can parry this by leaving conditioned individuals choices between lies, by raising spurious questions, false dilemmas. But such feeble distractions count for precious little in view of the survival sickness to which consumer society exposes its members.

At any instant boredom can breed an unanswerable rejection of uniformity. Recent events in Stockholm, Amsterdam, and Watts have shown how the merest pretext can precipitate salutary uprisings. What an immense quantity of oft-repeated lies can be swept away by a single burst of revolutionary poetry! From Villa to Lumumba, from Stockholm to Watts, qualitative agitation—agitation that radicalizes the masses because its source is the radicalism of the masses—effectively pushes back the frontiers of submission and brutishness.

No one, no matter how alienated, is without (or unaware of) an irreducible core of creativity, a *camera obscura* safe from intrusion by lies and constraints. If ever social organization extends its control to this stronghold of humanity, its dominion will no longer be exercised over anything save robots, or corpses. And, in a sense, that is why consciousness of creative energy increases, paradoxically enough, as a function of consumer society's efforts to co-opt it.

Argus is blind to the danger right in front of him. Where quantity reigns, quality has no recognized legal existence; but this is the very thing that safeguards and nourishes it. I have already noted that the dissatisfaction bred by the manic pursuit of quantity calls forth a radical desire for the qualitative. The more oppression is justified in terms of the freedom to consume, the more the malaise arising from this contradiction exacerbates the thirst for total freedom. The crisis of production-based capitalism pointed up the element of repressed creativity in the energy expended by the worker. The

alienation of creativity through forced labor, thanks to the exploitation of the producers, was denounced once and for all by Marx. Whatever the capitalist system and its successors (even antagonistic ones) have lost on the production front they try to make up for in the sphere of consumption. The plan is that, as they gradually free themselves from their duties as producers, human beings should be trapped by newer obligations as consumers. By opening up the empty lot of leisure time to a creativity liberated at long last by shorter working hours, the well-intentioned apostles of humanism have merely mustered an army fit for drilling on the training grounds of the consumer economy. Now that the alienation of the consumer is being laid bare by consumption's own internal dialectic, one may wonder what kind of prison awaits the highly subversive forces of individual creativity. As I pointed out earlier, the rulers' last chance here is to turn us all into organizers of our own passivity.

With touching candor, DeWitt Peters suggests that handing out paints, brushes, and canvas to everyone who requested them would produce very interesting results. It is true that if this policy were applied in a variety of well-defined and well-policed spheres, such as the theater, the plastic arts, music, writing, etc., and in a general way to any such sphere susceptible of total isolation from all others, then the system might have a hope of endowing people with the consciousness of the artist, which is to say the consciousness of someone who professes to exhibit their creativity in the museums and shop windows of culture. The popularity of such a culture would be a clear sign of Power's success. Fortunately, the chances of people being successfully "culturized" in this way are now slight. Do the cyberneticians and their ilk really imagine that people can be talked into "free experimentation" within bounds laid down by authoritarian decree? Or that prisoners at last aware of their creative capacity might daub their cells with "original graffiti" and leave it at that? What would prevent them from extending their newfound penchant for experiment to weapons, desires, dreams, and all manner of means of self-fulfillment? The crowd, after all, is already full of agitators. No: the last possible way of co-opting creativity—the organization of artistic passivity—is, happily, doomed to failure.

Spontaneity is the mode of being of individual creativity, its original, immaculate form, neither polluted at the source nor threatened by co-optation. Whereas creativity is the most equitably distributed thing imaginable, spontaneity seems to be the privileged possession of those whom long resistance to Power has endowed with a consciousness of their own value as individuals. In revolutionary moments this means the majority; at other times, when the revolution must be prepared day by day, it means more people than one might suppose. Wherever the light of creativity continues to shine, spontaneity has a chance.

“The new artist protests,” wrote [Tristan] Tzara in 1918. “He no longer paints . . . but creates directly.”¹ Immediacy is certainly the most succinct, but also the most radical demand that must characterize the new artists of today, who are destined to be constructors of situations to be lived directly. I say *succinct* because it is important after all not to be misled by the word *spontaneity*. The spontaneous can never spring from internalized constraints, even subconscious ones; nor can it abide alienating abstraction or spectacular co-optation: clearly it is a conquest, not a given. The reconstruction of the individual presupposes the reconstruction of the unconscious (consider the construction of dreams).

What spontaneous creativity has lacked up to now is the clear consciousness of its own poetry. Common sense has always treated spontaneity as a primary state, an initial stage in need of theoretical adjustment, of transposition into abstract terms. This view isolates spontaneity, treats it as a thing-in-itself—and thus recognizes it only in the travestied forms which it acquires within the spectacle (e.g., action painting). In point of fact spontaneous creativity carries the seeds of its effective development within itself. It is possessed of its own poetry.

I have already said that creativity, though equitably distributed to all, finds direct, *spontaneous* expression only on specific occasions. These are prerevolutionary moments, the source of the poetry that changes life and transforms the world.

Those who make a profession of creating, and those whose profession prevents them from creating, both artists and workers, are being pushed into the same nihilism by the process of proletarianization. This process, which is accompanied by resistance to it—resistance, that is, to co-opted forms of creativity—occurs amid such a plethora of cultural goods—records, films, paperback books—that once these commodities have been freed from the laws of consumption they will pass immediately into the service of true creativity. The sabotage of the mechanisms of economic and cultural consumption is epitomized by young people who steal the books in which they expect to find confirmation of their radicalism.

What is poetry? It is the organization of creative spontaneity, the deployment of the qualitative in accordance with its coherent inner logic. Poetry is what the Greeks call *poiein*, or “making,” but making restored to the purity of its original impulse—restored, in a word, to the totality.

Without the qualitative, no poetry is possible. The void left by poetry is filled by poetry’s opposites: information, transitional programs, specialization, reformism—all the motley guises of the fragmentary. But the presence of the qualitative does not of itself ensure the progression of poetry. The richest complex of signs and possibilities may well lapse into confusion, fall apart

for lack of consistency, or crumble by reason of crossed purposes. The yardstick of effectiveness must always remain supreme. Poetry is thus also radical theory completely integrated into action, the mortar binding tactics and revolutionary strategy, and the high point of the great game of everyday life.

What is poetry? In 1895, during an ill-advised and seemingly doomed French rail strike, a militant of the National Railwaymen's Union stood up and suggested an ingenious and cheap way of advancing the strikers' cause: "It takes two pennyworth of a particular substance used in the right way to immobilize a locomotive." It was not very long before the government and the bosses caved in. Poetry in this case was clearly the act that brought a new reality into being, that reversed the perspective. The *materia prima* is within everyone's reach. Poets are those who know how to use it to best effect. Furthermore, two pennyworth of some chemical is as nothing compared with the abundance of peerless ready energy afforded by everyday life itself: the energy of the will to live, the power of desire unleashed, the passion of love, the love of passion, the force of fear and anxiety, the rising tide of hate, and the repercussions of wild destructiveness. Who knows what poetic upheavals may confidently be expected to stem from such universally experienced feelings as those associated with death, old age, and sickness? This still marginal consciousness will surely be the starting point of the long revolution of everyday life, the only true poetry made by all and not by one alone.

"What is poetry?" ask the aesthetes. So, for their benefit, let us state the obvious: rarely does poetry today involve poems. Most works of art are betrayals of poetry. How could it be otherwise, when poetry and power cannot be reconciled? At best the artist's creativity builds a prison for itself, cloistering itself, awaiting its moment, within an *oeuvre* that has not yet said its last word; but, however high its author's hopes, that last word—supposed to herald perfect communication—can never be pronounced so long as the revolt of creativity has not yet brought art to its fulfillment.

The African work of art—poem, music, sculpture, or mask—is not considered complete until it has become creative speech, an active word: it must *function*. This holds true well beyond African art. There is no art in the world which does not seek to *function*; and to function—later co-optation notwithstanding—in accordance with the will that generated it, the will to live continually in the euphoria of the moment of creation. Why is it that the greatest works never seem to be finished? The answer is that great art cries out in every possible way for fulfillment, for the right to enter the world of lived experience. The degeneration of present-day art is a bow perfectly readied for such an arrow.

Nothing can save past culture from the cult of the past except those pictures, writings, musical or built architecture, and so on, whose qualitative

dimension reaches us independently of their forms (contaminated by the decay now affecting all artistic forms).

As we know, consumer society reduces art to a range of consumable products. This vulgarizing tendency accelerates degeneration but by the same token improves the prospects of supersession. That communication so urgently sought by the artist is jammed and banned even in the simplest relationships of everyday life. So true is this that the search for new forms of communication, far from being the preserve of painters and poets, is now part of a collective effort. This is the end of the old specialization of art. There are no more artists because everyone is an artist. The work of art of the future will be the construction of a passionate life.

Poetry is always somewhere. If it leaves the realm of the arts, it is all the easier to see that it belongs first and foremost in action, in a way of living and in the search for a way of living. Everywhere repressed, this poetry springs up everywhere. Brutally put down, it is reborn in violence. It consecrates riots, embraces rebellions, and animates all great revolutionary carnivals until the bureaucrats place it under house arrest in their hagiographical culture.

Lived poetry has effectively shown throughout history, even in partial revolts, even in crime—which [Ernest] Coeurderoy so aptly dubbed the “revolt of one”—that it is the protector *par excellence* of everything irreducible in mankind, meaning creative spontaneity. The will to unite the individual and the social, not on the basis of illusory community but on that of subjectivity, is what makes the new poetry into a weapon that everyone must learn to handle *by themselves*. Poetic experience is now at a premium. The organization of spontaneity will be the work of spontaneity itself.

NOTES

This piece is excerpted from Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012). Reprinted by permission of PM Press (<http://www.pmpress.org>).

1. Tristan Tzara, “Dada Manifesto,” March 23, 1918, available at <http://391.org/manifestos/1918-dada-manifesto-tristan-tzara.html#.Wa2M6siGOUk>.

6.2 Info-labor/Precarization

FRANCO “BIFO” BERARDI

THE PSYCHIC COLLAPSE OF THE ECONOMY

The digital nervous system incorporates itself progressively in the organic nervous system, in the circuit of human communication, and recodifies it

according to its operational lines and according to its own speed. But in order to fulfill this transformation, the body-mind must pass through an infernal mutation, that we see developing in the history of the world. To understand and to analyze this process, neither the conceptual instruments of political economy nor the instruments of technological analysis are sufficient. The process of production becomes semiotic and the formation of the digital nervous system co-involves and enervates the mind, the social psyche, desires and hopes, fears and imaginings. Therefore if we want to analyze these productive transformations, we must concern ourselves with semiotic production, with linguistic and cognitive mutations. And mutation passes through the range of pathologies.

Neoliberal culture has injected into the social brain a constant stimulus toward competition, and the technical system of the digital network has rendered possible an intensification of informatic stimuli, transmitted from the social brain to individual brains. This acceleration of stimuli is a pathogenic factor that has wide-ranging effects in society. Economic competition and digital intensification of informatic stimuli, combined together, induce a state of permanent electrocution that flows into a widespread pathology which manifests itself either in the panic syndrome or in attention disorders.

Panic is an ever more widespread syndrome. Until a few years ago, psychiatrists hardly recognized this symptom that belonged rather to the romantic literary imagination, and could approach the feeling of being overwhelmed by the infinite richness of the forms of nature by unlimited cosmic power. Today, instead, panic is ever more frequently denounced as a painful and worrying symptom, the physical sensation of no longer succeeding in governing one's own body, an acceleration of the heart rate, a shortness of breath that can lead to fainting and paralysis. Even if to my knowledge exhaustive research does not exist in this area, the hypothesis can be proposed that the mediatization of communication and the consequent rarefaction of physical contact can provoke pathologies in the affective and emotional sphere. For the first time in human history, there is a generation that has learnt more words and heard more stories from the televisual machine than from its mother. Attention disturbances are more and more widespread. Millions of North American and European children are treated for a disturbance that manifests itself as the incapacity to maintain concentrated attention on an object for more than a few seconds. The constant excitation of the mind on the part of neurostimulant fluxes probably leads to a pathological saturation. If we want to understand the contemporary economy we must concern ourselves with the psychopathology of relations. And if we want to understand contemporary psychochemistry we must take into account the fact that the mind is invested by semiotic fluxes that follow an extra-semiotic

principle: the principle of economic competition, the principle of maximum development. From the time when capitalism connected to the brain, the latter incorporated a pathological agent, a psychotic meme that will accelerate pulsations even to tremors, even to collapse.

In the 1990s, Prozac culture was intermingled with the new economy. Hundreds of thousands of operators, directors, and managers of the occidental economy took innumerable decisions in a state of chemical euphoria and psychopharmacological lightheadedness. But in the long term the organism collapsed, unable to support indefinitely the chemical euphoria that had sustained competitive enthusiasm and productivist fanaticism. Collective attention was supersaturated and this was provoking a collapse of a social and economic kind. As happens in a manic depressive organism, as happens with a patient affected by bipolar disorder, after the financial euphoria of the 1990s, there followed a depression. It is therefore a case of clinical depression that strikes motivation, initiative, self-esteem, desire, and sex appeal at the roots. To understand the crisis of the new economy it is necessary to begin from the psychic experience of the virtual class; it is necessary to reflect on the psychic and emotional state of the millions of cognitive workers who animated the scene of business, culture, and the imaginary during the decade of the 1990s. The individual psychic depression of a single cognitive worker is not a consequence of the economic crisis but its cause. It would be simple to consider depression as a consequence of a bad business cycle. After having worked for so many years happily and profitably, the value of shares has plummeted and our brainworker is overcome by an ugly depression. It does not happen in this way. Depression descends on the cognitive worker because his or her own emotional, physical, intellectual system cannot indefinitely support the hyperactivity provoked by the market and by pharmaceuticals. As a consequence, things are set to go badly in the market. What is the market? The market is the place in which signs and nascent meanings, desires and projections meet. If we want to speak of demand and supply, we must reason in terms of fluxes of desire and semiotic attractors that formerly had appeal and today have lost it.

In the Net economy, flexibility has evolved into a form of fractalization of work. Fractalization means the modular and recombinant fragmentation of the time of activity. The worker no longer exists as a person. He or she is only an interchangeable producer of microfragments of recombinant semiosis that enter into the continuous flux of the Net. Capital no longer pays for the availability of a worker to be exploited for a long period of time; it no longer pays a salary that covers the entire range of economic needs of a person who works. The worker (a machine endowed with a brain that can be used for fragments of time) becomes paid for his or her occasional, temporary services.

Work time is fragmented and cellularized. Cells of time are for sale on the Net and businesses can buy as much as they want without being obligated in any way in the social protection of the worker.

The intense and prolonged investment of mental and libidinal energies in the labor process has created the conditions for a psychic collapse that is transferred into the economic field with the recession and the fall in demand and into the political field in the form of military aggressivity. The use of the word *collapse* is not as a metaphor but as a clinical description of what is happening in the occidental mind. The word *collapse* expresses a real and exact pathological phenomenon that invests the psychosocial organism. That which we have seen in the period following the first signs of economic decline, in the first months of the new century, is a psychopathic phenomenon of overexcitation, trembling, panic, and finally of a depressive fall. The phenomena of economic depression have always contained elements of the crisis of the psychosocial equilibrium, but when at last the process of production has involved the brain in a massive way, psychopathology has become the crucial aspect of economic cycles.

The available attention time for the workers involved in the informatic cycle is constantly being reduced: they are involved in a growing number of mental tasks that occupy every fragment of their attention time. For them there is no longer the time to dedicate to love, to tenderness, to affection. They take Viagra because they don't have time for sexual preliminaries. They take cocaine to be continuously alert and reactive. They take Prozac to cancel out the awareness of the senselessness that unexpectedly empties their life of any interest. Cellularization has brought about a type of permanent occupation of living time. The effect is a mutation of social relations in a psychopathic direction. The signs are evident: millions of packets of psychopharmaceuticals sold, an epidemic of attention disturbances spreading among children and adolescents, the becoming normal of the diffusion of drugs like Ritalin in schools, and what seems to be the spreading of an epidemic of panic in the fabric of everyday life.

THE INFO-SPHERE AND THE SOCIAL MIND

The mediascape is the universe of transmitters that send to our brain signals according to the most varied formats. The info-sphere is the interface between the media system and the mind that receives the signals, the mental ecosphere, that immaterial sphere in which semiotic fluxes interact with the reception antennae of the minds scattered on the planet. The mind is the universe of receivers that are not naturally limited to receiving but process, create, and in their turn put in motion new processes of transmission and provoke the continuous evolution of the mediascape.

The evolution of the info-sphere's activation of always more complex networks of information distribution has produced a leap in the power, speed, and the very format of the info-sphere. There is no corresponding leap in the power and format of reception.

The universe of receivers, human brains of real people made of flesh, fragile and sensual organs, is not formatted according to the same standard as the system of digital transmitters. The functional paradigm of the universe of transmitters does not correspond to the functional paradigm of the universe of receivers. This asymmetry is manifested by various pathological effects: permanent electrocution, panic, overexcitation, hypermobility, attention disturbances, dyslexia, information overload, and saturation of reception circuits.

At the origin of this saturation, there is a real and proper deformity of formats. The format of the universe of transmitters has evolved, multiplying its powers, while the format of the universe of receivers has not been able to evolve in as rapid a manner, for the simple reason that it is based on an organic support (the human brain-body) that has evolutionary times completely different from the evolutionary times of machines.

That which is being determined could be defined as a paradigmatic discrepancy, a schism between the paradigm that models the universe of transmitters and the paradigm that models the universe of receivers. In a situation like this, communication becomes an asymmetrical disturbed process. We could speak in this regard of a discrepancy between cyberspace in unlimited and constant expansion and cybertime. Cyberspace is a network that includes mechanical and organic components whose processing power can be accelerated without limits, while cybertime is an essentially lived reality, linked to an organic support (the human body and brain) whose processing time cannot be accelerated beyond relatively rigid natural limits.

Since the time when, in 1977, he wrote the book *Speed and Politics*, Paul Virilio has maintained that speed is the decisive factor in modern history. It is thanks to speed, Virilio claims, that wars are won, both military and commercial ones. In many of his writings, Virilio shows that the speed of movements, of transportation, of motorization has allowed armies to win wars in the course of the last century. Since then, it has been possible to substitute objects, goods, and people for signs. By virtual, electronically transferable phantasms, the barriers of speed have been broken and the most impressive process of acceleration that human history has ever known has erupted. In a certain sense we can say that space no longer exists, given that information can cross it instantly and events can be transferred in real time from one place to another on the planet, becoming virtually shared events. But what are the consequences of this acceleration on the human mind, on the human

body? To understand it we must make reference to the capacity of conscious processing, to the capacity for affective assimilation of signs and events on the part of the conscious and sensitive organism.

The acceleration of information exchange has produced and is producing an effect of a pathological type on the individual human mind and even more on the collective mind. Individuals are not in a position to consciously process the immense and always growing mass of information that enters their computers, their cell phones, their television screens, their electronic diaries, and their heads. However, it seems indispensable to follow, recognize, evaluate, process all this information if you want to be efficient, competitive, victorious. The practice of *multitasking*, the opening of a window of hyper-textual attention, the passage from one context to another for the complex evaluation of processes, tends to deform the sequential modality of mental processing. According to Christian Marazzi, who has concerned himself in various books with the relations between economics, language, and affectivity, the latest generation of economic operators is affected by a real and proper form of dyslexia, incapable of reading a page from the beginning to the end according to sequential procedures, incapable of maintaining concentrated attention on the same object for a long time. And dyslexia spreads to cognitive and social behaviors, leading to rendering the pursuit of linear strategies nearly impossible.

Some, like [Thomas H.] Davenport and [John C.] Beck, speak of an attention economy. But when a cognitive faculty enters into and becomes part of economic discourse, this means that it has become a scarce resource. The necessary time for paying attention to the fluxes of information to which we are exposed and which must be evaluated in order to be able to make decisions is lacking. The consequence is in front of our eyes: political and economic decisions no longer respond to a long-term strategic rationality and simply follow immediate interests. On the other hand, we are always less available for giving our attention to others gratuitously. We no longer have the attention time for love, tenderness, nature, pleasure, and compassion. Our attention is ever more besieged and therefore we assign it only to our careers, to competition, and to economic decisions. And in any case our temporality cannot follow the insane speed of the hypercomplex digital machine. Human beings tend to become the ruthless executors of decisions taken without attention.

The universe of transmitters, or cyberspace, now proceeds at a superhuman velocity and becomes untranslatable for the universe of receivers, or cybertime, that cannot go faster than what is allowed by the physical material from which our brain is made, the slowness of our body, the need for caresses and affection. Thus opens a pathological gap and mental illness spreads as

testified by the statistics and above all our everyday experience. And just as pathology spreads, so too do drugs. The flourishing industry of psychopharmaceuticals beats records every year; the number of packets of Ritalin, Prozac, Zoloft, and other psychotropics sold in the pharmacies continually increases, while dissociation, suffering, desperation, terror, the desire not to exist, to not have to fight continuously, to disappear grows alongside the will to kill and to kill oneself.

When, toward the end of the 1970s, an acceleration of the productive and communicative rhythms in occidental metropolitan centers was imposed, a gigantic epidemic of drug addiction made its appearance. The world was leaving its human epoch to enter the era of machinic post-human acceleration: many sensitive organisms of the human variety began to snort cocaine, a substance that permits the acceleration of the existential rhythm leading to transforming oneself into a machine. Many other sensitive organisms of the human kind injected heroin in their veins, a substance that deactivates the relation with the speed of the surrounding atmosphere. The epidemic of powders during the 1970s and the 1980s produced an existential and cultural devastation with which we still haven't come to terms. Then illegal drugs were replaced by those legal substances which the pharmaceutical industry in a white coat made available for its victims, and this was the epoch of antidepressants, of euphorics, and of mood regulators.

Today psychopathy reveals itself ever more clearly as a social epidemic and, more precisely, a socio-communicational one. If you want to survive you have to be competitive, and if you want to be competitive you must be connected, receive, and process continuously an immense and growing mass of data. This provokes a constant attentive stress, a reduction of the time available for affectivity. These two tendencies, inseparably linked, provoke an effect of devastation on the individual psyche: depression, panic, anxiety, the sense of solitude and existential misery. But these individual symptoms cannot be indefinitely isolated, as psychopathology has done up until now and as economic power wishes to do. It is not possible to say: "You are exhausted, go and take a vacation at Club Med, take a pill, make a cure, get the hell away from it all, recover in the psychiatric hospital, kill yourself." It is no longer possible, for the simple reason that it is no longer a matter of a small minority of crazies or a marginal amount of depressives. It concerns a growing mass of existential misery that is tending always more to explode in the center of the social system. Besides, it is necessary to consider a decisive fact: at the time when capital needed to suck in physical energy from its exploited and from its slaves, psychopathology could be relatively marginalized. Your psychic suffering didn't matter much to capital when you only had to insert screws and handle a lathe. You could be as sad as a solitary fly in a bottle, but your

productivity was hardly affected because your muscles could still function. Today capital needs mental energies, psychic energies. And these are exactly the capacities that are fucking up. It's because of this that psychopathology is exploding in the center of the social scene. The economic crisis depends for the most part on a circulation of sadness, depression, panic, and demotivation. The crisis of the new economy was provoked in a large part by a crisis of motivations, by a fall of the artificial euphoria of the 1990s. This has led to effects of disinvestment and in part even to a reduction of consumption. In general, unhappiness functions as a stimulus to consume: buying is a suspension of anxiety, an antidote to loneliness, but only up to a certain point. Beyond this certain point, suffering becomes a demotivating factor for purchasing. There is therefore an elaboration of conflicting strategies. The masters of the world certainly do not want humanity to be able to be happy, because a happy humanity would not let itself be caught up in productivity, in the discipline over work or in hypermarkets. However, they try out useful techniques to make unhappiness moderate and tolerable, for postponing or preventing a suicidal explosion, for inducing consumption.

What strategies will the collective organism follow in order to escape this fabric of unhappiness? Is a strategy of deceleration, of the reduction of complexity possible and able to be hypothesized? I don't believe so. In human society, potentialities cannot be definitively canceled out, even when they are revealed to be lethal for the individual and probably even for the species. These potentials become regulated and kept under control for as long as possible, but in the end are inevitably used as happened (and will happen again) with the atomic bomb. A strategy of the *upgrading* of the human organism is possible—of the mechanical adjustment of the human body and brain to a hyperfast info-sphere. This is the strategy that is used to define the *post-human*. Finally a strategy of subtraction is possible, of distancing from the vortex, but this is a type of strategy that only small communities can follow, constituting spheres of existential, economic, and informatic autonomy with respect to the economic world.

PANIC WAR AND SEMIO-CAPITAL

Globalization stands reframed in the dark light of the global war. This means we need to reconceptualize the change that is taking place in the social, economic, and anthropological form of globalization. During the past two centuries, global control was the general techno-utopia of capitalist society and modern culture. Now, the time of global control is over. We are completely out of this framework today. The new governing framework of capitalism

is global panic. If we want to understand what panic means we have to talk about the attention economy and about “digital labor.” This is where the source of contemporary panic lies: in the organization of time in the digital sphere, in the relationship between cyberspace and cybertime.

What is panic? We are told that psychiatrists have recently discovered and named a new kind of disorder—they call it Panic Syndrome. It seems that it’s something quite recent in the psychological self-perception of human beings. But what does panic mean?

Once, *panic* used to be a nice word, and this is the sense in which the Swiss-American psychoanalyst James Hillman remembers it in his book on Pan. Pan used to be the god of nature, the god of totality. In Greek mythology, Pan was the symbol of the relationship between man and nature.

Nature is the overwhelming flow of reality, things, and information that we are surrounded by. Modern culture is based on the idea of human domination, of the domestication of nature. So the original panic feeling, which was something good for the ancient world, is becoming increasingly terrifying and destructive. Today, panic has become a form of psychopathology. We can speak of panic when we see a conscious organism (individual or social) being overwhelmed by the speed of processes he/she is involved in, and has no time to process the information input. In these cases the organism, all of a sudden, is no more able to process the sheer amount of information coming into its cognitive field or even that which is being generated by the organism itself.

Technological transformations have displaced the focus from the sphere of the production of material goods toward the sphere of semiotic goods: the info-sphere. With this, semio-capital becomes the general form of the economy. The accelerated creation of surplus value depends on the acceleration of the info-sphere. The digitalization of the info-sphere opens the road to this kind of acceleration. Signs are produced and circulated at a growing speed but the human terminal of the system (the embodied mind) is put under growing pressure, and finally it cracks. I think that the current economic crisis has something to do with this imbalance in the field of semio-production and in the field of semio-demand. This imbalance in the relationship between the supply of semiotic goods and the socially available time of attention is the core of the economic crisis as well as the core of the intellectual and the political crises that we are living through now.

We can describe this situation in terms of the relationship between cyberspace and cybertime. Cyberspace is the infinite productivity of collective intelligence in a networked dimension. The potency of the general intellect is enormously enhanced when a huge number of points enter into

connections with each other thanks to the telematic network. Consequently, info-production is able to create an infinite supply of mental and intellectual goods. But while cyberspace is conceptually infinite, cybertime is not infinite at all. I call cybertime the ability of the conscious organism to actually process (cyberspatial) information. This ability cannot be indefinitely expanded, because it has limits that are physical, emotional, affective. The contradiction between infinite expansion of cyberspace and limited capability of processing of cybertime is the origin of contemporary chaos.

[Gilles] Deleuze and [Félix] Guattari talk about chaos in *What Is Philosophy?* They say that chaos occurs when the world goes too fast for your brain. This is chaos.

We could recall that Karl Marx had once expressed the concept of an overproduction crisis. You have an overproduction crisis when machinery and the labor of workers produce an amount of goods that the market cannot absorb. During the history of the industrial system, the overproduction crisis was recurrent, and capitalism was pushed to destroy goods, destroy productive capacity, and also destroy human lives, in order to overcome this kind of economic crisis.

What is going to happen now? Should we see a relationship between this big imbalance and the war that is raging and obscuring the horizon of the world? Let's go back to the concept of panic.

Semio-capital is in a crisis of overproduction, but the form of this crisis is not only economic but also psychopathic. Semio-capital, in fact, is not about the production of material goods but about the production of psychic stimulation. The mental environment is saturated by signs that create a sort of continuous excitation, a permanent electrocution, which leads the individual mind as well as the collective mind to a state of collapse.

The problem of panic is generally connected with the management of time. But we can also see a spatial side to panic. During the past centuries, the building of the modern urban environment used to be dependent on the rationalist plan of the political city. The economic dictatorship of the last few decades has accelerated urban expansion. The interaction between cyberspatial sprawl and urban physical environment has destroyed the rationalist organization of space.

In the intersection of information and urban space we see the proliferation of a chaotic sprawl following no rule, no plan, dictated by the sole logic of economic interest. Urban panic is caused by the perception of this sprawl and this proliferation of metropolitan experience; the proliferation of spatial lines of flight. The metropolis is a surface of complexity in the territorial domain. The social organism is unable to process the overwhelmingly complex

experience of metropolitan chaos. The proliferation of lines of communication has created a new kind of chaotic perception.

In their book *The Attention Economy*, Davenport and Beck say that the central problem of the cognitive worker, and generally of people who are living in hypersaturated informational environments, is this: we have no more time for attention, we are no more able to understand and process information input because our time is saturated by a flow of hyperinformation. We don't have time for attention in the workplace. We are forced to process far too large amounts of information and our body-mind is completely taken by this. And further, we have no time for affection, for communication, for erotic relationships. We have no more time for that spatial kind of attention that means attention to the body—to our body, to the body of the other. So, more and more, we feel that we have run out of time; that we must accelerate. And we feel simultaneously that acceleration leads to a loss of life, of pleasure and of understanding.

COMPETE

The concept of competition has replaced that of competence.

Competence is the intellectual skill that enabled the bourgeoisie to carry out its planning, administrative, and organizational function, and justified its right to property.

Ever since the technologies of intelligence made it possible to standardize the processes of planning, coordination, and administration that once coalesced with the role of ownership, intellectual functions have turned into the functions of subordinate labor.

The competent bourgeoisie was replaced by a class that turned competition into the only rule and competence. However, when speaking of competition, is it not obvious that the most competitive is the one who can eliminate the adversaries? And when it comes to eliminating adversaries things get serious.

As property came to coincide with a dusty cloud of fractions of investment rather than with the person, competition replaced competence. Many competences are still necessary to production, but they are now detached from the role of the enterprise. Any intellectual competence that is not related to speculation is made precarious, devalued, and low waged.

Crime is no longer a marginal function of the capitalist system but the decisive winning factor for deregulated competition. Torture, homicide, child exploitation, the drive to prostitution, and the production of instruments of mass destruction have become irreplaceable techniques of economic competition. Crime is best suited to the principle of competition.

NOTE

This piece is excerpted from Franco “Bifo” Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody: Semicapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-Alpha Generation* (London: Minor Compositions, 2009). Reprinted by permission of Minor Compositions (<http://www.minorcompositions.info/>).

6.3 Imaginal Machines

STEPHEN SHUKAITIS

There has long existed both an intense and troubled connection between avant-garde arts and autonomous politics. That a composition is aesthetically innovative does not necessarily mean that it’s particularly progressive politically, either in its content or the relations animated through its creation and circulation. The Futurists do not just represent the point where, as Stewart Home explores, utopian currents based around the integration of all aspects of life, which were viewed primarily as religious during medieval times, moved over to be considered part of the artistic sphere.¹ The Futurists are perhaps the clearest indication that interesting aesthetics do not necessarily correspond to progressive politics, as their intense fascination with war, speed, patriotism, and eventual movement toward fascism display. There are countless more examples less dramatic but all the more complex, ranging from surrealism’s turbulent relation to the institutional communist movement (and eventual severing and usage by U.S. state propaganda efforts and fronts) to debates about the role of street art in gentrification.

One recurring challenge for political art is to circumvent the assumption, implicitly contained within a didactic composition, that the work’s arguments can take place in an already existing public sphere—the common ground and frame of reference—that preexists the particular expression. Unaware of this challenge, much political artwork strives to create interesting and compelling arguments, flourishes of speech, in hopes that the message will reach the listener with little interference. In order for political speech to cause affective resonance, conditions need to exist for the constituted audience to be able to identify with those who are expressing them, to possess a capacity to affect and be affected. This process of affective composition so often begins from minor moments and interactions: yet through them spaces of commonality, where new relations and interactions are possible, emerge. [Gilles] Deleuze and [Félix] Guattari’s observation that “the people are missing” is not a lament but a realization that the task of politics is precisely the composition of common space through processes of intensive engagement not bound by the closure of already understood identities and positions.² This is precisely the point explored by Randy Martin in his work on the role

of theater in the producing and forming of publics, acting as a means for the production of socialist ensembles: “publics must continue to be generated if a revolutionary project is to maintain its resonance.”³ For Martin autonomy is not something granted but rather a critical presence existing through and despite networks of governance. The continual generation of new publics, of new forms of the resonance of ideas and relations, is the process of affective composition, whether through the forming of publics through theater or any other of the possible means.

But what is meant by affective composition? At the risk of launching yet another trendy neologism, the concept of affective composition is formed by the bringing together of notions of affect with the autonomist notion of class composition. The concept of affect was developed in a submerged history of philosophy, stretching from Spinoza to Deleuze and Guattari (and having been developed further by figures such as Antonio Negri and Genevieve Lloyd), to indicate an increase in capacity to affect or to be affected by the world. For Deleuze and Guattari, artistic creation is the domain of affective resonance, where imagination shifts through the interacting bodies. Composition is used here, borrowing from the autonomist Marxist notion of class composition, indicating the autonomous and collective capacities to change the world created through social resistance. As forms of collective capacity and self-organization are increased, composed by the circulation of struggles and ideas, the workings of the state and capitalism attempt to find ways to disperse them or to integrate these social energies into their own workings. Thus there are formed cycles of the composition, decomposition, and recomposition of struggles. A key insight of autonomist thought was the argument that the nature of struggles and the forms of social cooperation created within in them determine the direction of capitalist development, rather than the autonomous self-directed power of capital. Considering affective composition through forms of street art and performance is to look at the ways that the capacities they create contribute to the development of affective capacities and forms of self-organization. It is the ways in which street arts can take place in what the Infernal Noise Brigade mission statement describes as “facilit[at]ing the self-actualization of the mob.”⁴ This self-actualization is not something which ever reaches a final or finished point, but continually doubles over and immanently above itself, turning cycles of struggles into spirals of movement composition.

The affective composition of relations and intensities in aesthetic politics is a pressing question because of ways that the possibilities for the existence of public and common space have changed over recent years. The increasingly drastic commercialization of public space, corporate domination of media outlets, and predominance of fearmongering in all areas of life has created a

condition where there are immense flows of information and data available for discussion but precious little public sphere in which this data can resonate. Paolo Virno argues that where forms of collective intelligence do not find expression in a public sphere where common affairs can be attended to, it produces terrifying effects and proliferations of unchecked and groundless hierarchies. These are areas of “publicness without a public sphere.”⁵ There are flows of information and images constantly surrounding and immersing us that allow for new possibilities for communication and the formation of subjectivities, but which can also be quite overwhelming and go in directions that are not necessarily liberatory. Chat rooms and blogs meld seamlessly with the commercial landscapes of gentrified cities and the twenty-four-hour-a-day flow of “news” that may excite the libido or intone the constant reminder of “be afraid” but do not constitute a common place of collective engagement. More than anything they tend to proactively prevent the emergence of shared space in ways that have not been overcoded by the workings of state or capital.

One cannot assume that there is an already existing public sphere, an existing arrangements of bodies, ready to receive information conveyed through an artistic composition. Relying on the expected aesthetics of propaganda means circumscribing possible patterns of resonance more limited than might be wished. Political art derives its politics not just by its content but also by the ways in which it is designed to work with or against the predetermined forms of circulation of ideas, images, and relations. In other words, to appreciate that forms of street art do not derive their subversiveness simply from the fact that they occur on the street (which can also include a whole range of viral marketing and quotidian forms of spectacular recuperation), but rather from unfolding the relations that avoid the overcoding operations of the art institution and commodity production. It is this focus on patterns of circulation and relations as a politico-aesthetic activity, what George Katsiaficas describes as “engaging aesthetic rationality in the process of political transformation, of turning politics into art, everyday life into an aesthetically governed domain,” that comprises the process of affective composition.⁶

One approach to understanding relationships and the construction of community in an artistic framework recently has been Nicolas Bourriaud’s notion of “relational aesthetics,” which he developed during the mid-1990s coming out of his curatorial work. Relational aesthetics, which Bourriaud frames as part of a materialist tradition, is argued to represent a theory not of art but of form—namely, one where “intersubjectivity does not only represent the social setting for the reception of art . . . but also becomes the quintessence of artistic practice.”⁷ Collective understandings, experiences, and interactions then are not something that is added on the work afterward

but rather compose the starting point and substance of the work itself. While any artwork can be thought of as a relational object through the kinds of interactions it animates (oftentimes a gentle stare with a determined air of trying to appear clever), the difference here is that these relations are the core of the work itself. Bourriaud argues that today the designation of art seems to be little more than a “semantic leftover” which should be replaced by a definition like “art is an activity consisting in producing relationships with the world with the help of signs, forms, actions, and objects.”⁸

From this Bourriaud tries to recast the critical function of aesthetic intervention, arguing that rather than being based on forming imaginary and utopian realities, artistic intervention is aimed at forming living models of action and being within the existing world. The artistic composition exists then as “a *social interstice* within these experiments and these new ‘life possibilities’ appear as possible.”⁹ A piece’s aura no longer lies in another projected world, or in the form itself, but rather in the temporary collectives and communities that coalesce for the purposes of producing the exhibition or the space itself (although for Bourriaud clearly this is all about the exhibition rather than any diffuse process of creation going beyond the gallery walls). For Bourriaud the subversive and critical function of artistic creation is the invention of individual and collective vanishing lines, lines of flight, in the creation of temporary nomadic constructions.

At first this seems reasonable enough, and relatively close to what I’m describing as the process of affective composition, the movement from artistic creation based around objects to the creation of relations and modulations of affect. But slowly the situation becomes more problematic. For instance, there’s no necessary dichotomy between forming imaginary and utopian realities and micropactices of intervention. Utopian dreams and models, rather than being stated and fixed models to impose, have often acted as inspirations for finding micropolitical modes of intervention, which is to say that they have often been connected rather than mutually exclusive. Likewise one can build an overall vision drawing from and extending micropactices. But what might at first appear to be a relatively minor difference not worth quibbling about that much becomes more pronounced, especially when Bourriaud makes the argument that today “social utopias and revolutionary hopes have given way to everyday micro-utopias and imitative strategies, [and] any stance that is directly ‘critical’ of society is futile.”¹⁰ Rather than there being just a distinction between imaginary and utopian projects, here it is argued that these projects insofar as they are directly critical of the social world (the state, capitalism, war, exploitation) are futile. In other words, dear artist, give up any hopes of having anything to say about social conditions on any large scale and make yourself content with micro-interventions and practices.

This sounds quite similar to approaches ascribed to politics and thought coming in the wake of 1968 and poststructuralism and so-called identity politics. In other words, a shift in politics, from grand to minor, in a way that micropractices and interventions are divorced from large questions and social structures.

This does not mean that all practices and questions have to be directly oriented to addressing large-scale social and historical projects, as might be argued by the looming clichéd image of the overly zealous Trotskyite who insists that everything must be about directly contesting capitalism from the perspective of the working class or it is “objectively reactionary.” There are many ways to congeal and conjoin minor articulations informed by and relating to large social questions that are fundamentally concerned with an overall social critique, without having that critique determine and overly confine these practices.

But let us return for a second to a particular kind of moment of the breaking down of barriers through affective composition, namely through forming an affective space through and around the performance of radical marching bands. A moment where the passivity of the crowd perhaps is broken and the nature of the space is transformed. Bodies milling about, held awkwardly at a distance, a space maintained and looks a little chilly. Not from malice or mistrust but from not knowing. But in that instant borders fall. The first hit of the drum is the first crack in the wall of the objectifying, separating gaze, the space created by the passive stare of an audience toward a performance, an exhibition: a spectacle. As the melody pulses through the crowd we revel in the timbre of the horns. Arms, words, memory, and noise tenuously connect through time and desire. Ideas, memories, histories, cultures, and stories are crossbred. Rage blends with joy; dislocation is replaced by emerging, momentary worlds.

It is in this sense that radical marching bands are of the most interest: in the ways they undercut the usual space (and sometimes relations) of performance and create mobile and affective spaces in the streets where it becomes possible for other forms of relations to emerge. Projects such as the Hungry March Band, the Infernal Noise Brigade, and Rhythms of Resistance, closely connected with the late 1990s upswing in streets protests and parties such as Reclaim the Streets, brought carnivalesque energies and excitement into the all too often ritualistic and stale mode of political protest. One could argue, perhaps paradoxically, that while in the upswing of organizing and summit protests that occurred in the post-'99 realization there already were existing movements against the more egregious excesses of the state and capitalism; there was somewhat of a shift away from diffuse forms of cultural politics to more spectacular media-friendly forms such as mass mobilizations and

lockdowns. Radical marching bands and other forms of tactical frivolity were important in keeping open space for the emergence of intensive and affective relations within such spaces, relations which hopefully would find their ways out on to all of the fabric of daily life.

Hakim Bey describes how marching bands were invented by Turkish Janissaries, members of the Ottoman Imperial Guard, who belonged to a heterodox Bektashi Sufi order. The marching band, developed for use in military campaigns, functioned as a form of psychological warfare through music that induced sheer terror in their opponents.¹¹ Their effect on European armies, who had never experienced anything like that previously, must have been complete fear, most likely resulting in increased morale among the Turkish troops. Marching bands were adopted by European states for use in military campaigns and increasingly in symbolic and ceremonial functions as forms of amplified communications technologies became developed. Forms of marching band music moved with the migration of Roma people from the Ottoman Empire to the southern United States, who brought along with them brass instruments that had a profound effect on the development of music in the area.

Not surprisingly, then, the repertoire of many marching bands is also a veritable melting pot of styles, cultures, and background, bringing together anything from jazz and big band tunes to klezmer, Moroccan music and Indian wedding tunes to calypso, salsa, reggae, and Sun Ra. There are also large degrees of inspiration from projects that have merged together the energy of punk rock and street performance, such as Crash Worship and ¡TchKung! (who had members that went on to form marching bands). There are large degrees of crossover and mixing between political marching bands and other forms of street and performance art and theater (such as Vermont's Bread & Puppet Theater, which provided a key source of inspiration for many marching bands) as well as underground circus and vaudeville (such as the Bindle-stiff Family Cirkus and Circus Contraption).

One of the best examples I can think of for how a marching band altered the composition of a situation occurred at the Foo Festival in Providence, Rhode Island, in July 2006. The event, organized by people from AS220, a local arts space, filled the greater part of a city block while literally thousands of people milled about attending various talks and workshops, casually munching on food, browsing through the wares of booksellers, and watching bands and musicians perform on a stage located near one end of the festival. At several points during the day the What Cheer? Brigade, a local marching band, would materialize replete with propulsive drumming and piercing horns, resplendent in motley attire that one would be hard pressed to call uniforms. Their appearance changed the nature of the situation because as

they would enter the space people would begin to dance and frolic around with them as they moved through the space, rather than staying fixed on the stage as a focal point, one that clearly marked the difference between those who were performing and observing. This increase in the generalized level of conviviality affected not only those directly involved in the dancing but seemed to move beyond itself as those around it somehow found new reasons to converse and interact with people they hadn't spoken with before.

The marching band may most commonly be experienced as an appendage to the state form, as a space defined by tightly scripted and controlled lines and the military insignia. They are encountered at the military or civic parade, or perhaps as a motivational soundtrack to a sports competition.¹² And it is perhaps this association that makes their playful *détournement* and reappropriation to serve other ends all the more delicious. March music might usually typically have resonance with the workings of the war machine, but as Deleuze and Guattari would remind us, this war machine can never totally be integrated into the workings of governance: there is always something that escapes. It is a process that exceeds that subject and existing communicative structures yet paradoxically one that creates a space where the possibility of transversal commonality exists. And the war machine, understood as a space of exteriority to the state, can also be understood as a transformation machine, as the nomadic flows and machinations that constitute spaces of possibility.

Stencil art and graffiti as well as street performances play an important role in breaking down the forms of relations created by artistic activity as separated or removed from daily life because they can be inscribed within the flows of people's everyday lives, in the streets, and in subways. But this does not inherently mean that such activities contain the possibility for reorienting people's expectations or will result in certain responses. And indeed, it is possible that what was once an innovative creative activity can become standardized and expected in such ways that the affectivity it initially generated is longer as intensive or effective in its workings. And if Banksy, or someone as marketable as him, should come to your town, it can drive up the real estate values as well. Even the most apparently subversive imagery can be reincorporated and recuperated back into the workings of the spectacle.

This constituent and affective space for creating new relations is not one that can be created and continue to exist without interference or difficulty. Temporary autonomous zones are temporary for a reason—namely, the realization that attempts to create such spaces will inevitably face repression and recuperation. Thus, it is often not tactically sensible to create a space and maintain it (investing time, energies, and cost) against all odds. These moments and spaces are described quite well by the Leeds May Day Group

as “moments of excess.”¹³ One can see how with phenomena as diverse as the rise of punk and social centers to culture jamming and Critical Mass, through different mixes of co-optation and legal action, a space that once vibrant and full of possibilities comes to be a bit lackluster. But the compositional capacities of these ruptures are not unlimited, for they too through repetition become ritualized and fall back into solidified patterns of circulation. The question becomes one of keeping open the affective capacities of the created space: to find ways to avoid the traps of spectacular recuperation and the solidification of constituent moments and possibilities into fixed and constituted forms that have lost their vitality.

It’s in this way that the concept of the art strike, as originally proposed by Gustav Metzger, and then further developed by Stewart Home and the Praxis Group in 1990–1993, becomes useful for the composition of struggles. At a juncture where capitalism is increasingly reliant on the production of new images, relations, and affects for its continued existence, [it] struggles to find ways to intervene in these somewhat more ephemeral realms. This is why Home argues that the importance of the art strike lies less in its feasibility or its concrete success, but rather in the possibility it opens up for extending and intensifying class war: “By extending and redefining traditional conceptions of the strike, the organization of the art strike intends to both increase its value both as a weapon of struggle and a means of disseminating proletarian propaganda.”¹⁴ The withdrawal of artistic labor needs to be collective in a significant way to have any effect, for to only have one artist striking against the institutional machinery (as with Metzger’s first strike), or a handful (as with the Praxis Group), while quite conceptually interesting, has little in the way of effects.¹⁵ The withdrawal of artistic labor can only be aided by disruption of artistic production and communication by inducing of confusion and distortion of communication guerillas in the mystifications of the post-Fordist world. As the autonome a.f.r.i.k.a. gruppe argues, “When information becomes a commodity and Cultural Capital a most important asset, the distortion and devaluation of both is a direct attack against the capitalist system. To say it in a swanky way: This is Class War.”¹⁶ This is much the tactic explored in the discussion of the IWW Starbucks campaign: insofar as the production and ambiances is central to Starbucks, monkey wrenching their image production process can be understood as industrial action. Or, as Patrick Reinsborough describes it, “direct action at the point of assumption.”¹⁷

This would mean to work with a sense of aesthetic politics and interventions that are not necessarily or totally based on the elements contained within the work itself, but on understanding the possibilities created for affective relations, spaces, and interactions and their intensification and

deepening by the process of artistic creation. And to continually modify the composition of these situations, subtracting them from circulation and visibility, and turning toward disruption, confusion and illegibility, in the face of recuperation. This is to understand artistic creation as what George Kubler describes as the shaping of time: art as a succession of works and productions distributed through time that embody the development of forms of collective time and relations. That is, a process that is not necessarily predicated on the creation of meaning, but as an intervention or opening into a system of relations, connecting innovations that are passed along and mutated through the modulation of the relations in which they exist, on a terrain and topology of time “where relationships rather than magnitudes are the subject of study.”¹⁸ It is in these chains of relations that radical innovations in work, form, idea, and practice are passed along, mutated, and linked in a succession of works embodying forms of collective time and relations.

NOTES

This piece is excerpted from Stephen Shukaitis, *Imaginal Machines: Autonomy and Self-Organization in the Revolutions of Everyday Life* (London: Minor Compositions, 2009). Reprinted by permission of Minor Compositions (<http://www.minorcompositions.info/>).

1. Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture: Utopian Currents from Lettrisme to Class War* (Edinburgh, UK: AK Press, 1991).

2. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 26; also see Nick Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx, and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003).

3. Randy Martin, *Socialist Ensembles: Theater and State in Nicaragua and Cuba* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 197.

4. Jennifer Whitney, “Infernal Noise: The Soundtrack to Insurrection,” in *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism*, ed. Notes from Nowhere (London: Verso Books, 2003), 219.

5. Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, trans. Isabella Bertolotti, James Cascaito, and Andrea Casson (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 40–41.

6. George Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics: European Autonomous Movements and the Decolonization of Everyday Life* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2006), 230.

7. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleassance and Fronza Woods (New York: Les presses du reel, 2002), 22.

8. *Ibid.*, 107.

9. *Ibid.*, 45.

10. *Ibid.*, 31.

11. Hakim Bey, “The Utopian Blues,” in *Sounding Off! Music as Subversion/Resistance/Revolution*, ed. Ron Sakolsky and Fred Wei-Han Ho (New York: Autonomedia, 1995), 31.

12. The author admits to briefly playing trumpet in a high school marching band.

13. Leeds May Day Group, “Moments of Excess” *Autonomedia*, October 21, 2004, available at <http://dev.autonomedia.org/node/3641>.

14. Stewart Home, *Neoism, Plagiarism, and Praxis* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1995), 27.

15. For an exploration of the relation between aesthetic labor and emotional labor, specifically the kinds of embodiment found in their conjunction, see Anne Witz, Chris Warhurst, and Dennis Nickson, "The Labor of Aesthetics of Organization," *Organization* 18, no. 1 (2003): 33–54.

16. autonome a.f.r.i.k.a. gruppe, "What Is a Communication Guerilla?" in *An@rchitects: Voices from the Global Digital Resistance*, ed. Joanne Richardson (New York: Autonomedia, 2003), 89.

17. Patrick Reinsborough, "De-colonizing the Revolutionary Imagination," *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest* 1, no. 3 (2003): 40.

18. George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1962), 83.

7 | Language, Literature, and Art

The nobodies: nobody's children, owners of nothing. The nobodies: the no ones, the nobodied, running like rabbits, dying through life, screwed every which way.

—Eduardo Galeano, *The Book of Embraces*

True art, which is not content to play variations on ready-made models but rather insists on expressing the inner needs of man and of mankind in its time—true art is unable not to be revolutionary, not to aspire to a complete and radical reconstruction of society.

—André Breton, “Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art”

7.1 How We Could Have Lived or Died This Way

MARTÍN ESPADA

Not songs of loyalty alone are these,
But songs of insurrection also,
For I am the sworn poet of every dauntless rebel the world over.

—Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

I see the dark-skinned bodies falling in the street as their ancestors fell before the whip and steel, the last blood pooling, the last breath spitting. I see the immigrant street vendor flashing his wallet to the cops, shot so many times there are bullet holes in the soles of his feet. I see the deaf woodcarver and his pocketknife, crossing the street in front of a cop who yells, then fires. I see the drug raid, the wrong door kicked in, the minister's heart seizing up. I see the man hawking a fistful of cigarettes, the cop's chokehold that makes his wheezing lungs stop wheezing forever. I am in the crowd, at the window, kneeling beside the body left on the asphalt for hours, covered in a sheet.

I see the suicides: the conga player handcuffed for drumming on the subway, hanged in the jail cell with his hands cuffed behind him; the suspect leaking blood from his chest in the back seat of the squad car; the 300-pound boy said to stampede barehanded into the bullets drilling his forehead.

I see the coroner nodding, the words he types in his report burrowing into the skin like more bullets. I see the government investigations stacking, words buzzing on the page, then suffocated as bees suffocate in a jar. I see the next Black man, fleeing as the fugitive slave once fled the slave-catcher, shot in the back for a broken tail light. I see the cop handcuff the corpse.

I see the rebels marching, hands upraised before the riot squads, faces in bandannas against the tear gas, and I walk beside them unseen. I see the poets, who will write the songs of insurrection generations unborn will read or hear a century from now, words that make them wonder how we could have lived or died this way, how the descendants of slaves still fled and the descendants of slave-catchers still shot them, how we awoke every morning without the blood of the dead sweating from every pore.

7.2 My Name Is Espada

MARTÍN ESPADA

Espada: the word for sword in Spain
wrought by fire and the hammer's chime,
name for the warrior reeling helmet-hooded
through the pandemonium of horses in mud,
or the face dreaming on a sarcophagus,
hands folded across the hilt of stone.

Espada: sword in el Caribe,
rapier tested sharp across the bellies of indios, steel tongue
lapping blood like a mastiff gorged on a runaway slave,
god gleaming brighter than the god nailed to the cross,
forged at the anvil with chains by the millions
tangled and red as the entrails of demons.

Espada: baptizing Taíno or Congolese,
name they stuttered in the barking language
of priests and overseers, slave's finger pressed to the blade
with the pulsing revelation that a Spaniard's throat
could seep blood like a fingertip, sabers for the uprising
smuggled in the hay, slave of the upraised saber
beheaded even as the servants and fieldhands
murmured he is not dead, he rides a white horse at night,
his sword is a torch, the master cannot sleep,
there is a dagger under the pillow.

Espada: cousin to the machete, peasant cutlass
 splitting the cane like a peasant's backbone,
 cousin to the kitchen knife skinning a plátano.
 Swords at rest, the machetero or cook
 studied their blisters as if planets
 to glimpse the hands of their father the horseman,
 map the hands of their mother the serf.

Espada: sword in Puerto Rico, family name of bricklayers
 who swore their trowels fell as leaves from iron trees;
 teachers who wrote poems in galloping calligraphy;
 saintcarvers who whittled a slave's gaze and a conqueror's beard;
 shoemaker spitting tuberculosis, madwoman
 dangling a lantern to listen for the cough;
 gambler in a straw hat inhabited by mathematical angels;
 preacher who first heard the savior's voice
 bleeding through the plaster of the jailhouse;
 dreadlocked sculptor stunned by visions of birds,
 sprouting wings from his forehead, earthen wings in the fire.

So the face dreaming on a sarcophagus,
 the slave of the saber riding a white horse by night
 breathe my name, tell me to taste my name: Espada.

NOTE

This poem was previously published as Martín Espada, "My Name Is Espada," in *A Mayan Astronomer in Hell's Kitchen* (New York: Norton, 2000), 15–16.

7.3 Vivas to Those Who Have Failed

The Paterson Silk Strike, 1913

MARTÍN ESPADA

Vivas to those who have fail'd!
 And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea!
 And to those themselves who sank in the sea!
 And to all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome heroes!
 And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest heroes known!

—Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

I. THE RED FLAG

The newspapers said the strikers would hoist
the red flag of anarchy over the silk mills
 of Paterson. At the strike meeting, a dyers' helper
 from Naples rose as if from the steam of his labor,
 lifted up his hand and said *here is the red flag:*
 brightly stained with dye for the silk of bow ties
 and scarves, the skin and fingernails boiled away
 for six dollars a week in the dye house.

He sat down without another word, sank back
 into the fumes, name and face rubbed off
 by oblivion's thumb like a Roman coin
 from the earth of his birthplace dug up
 after a thousand years, as the strikers
 shouted the only praise he would ever hear.

II. THE RIVER FLOODS THE AVENUE

He was the other Valentino, not the romantic sheik
 and bullfighter of silent movie palaces who died too young,
 but the Valentino standing on his stoop to watch detectives
 hired by the company bully strikebreakers onto a trolley
 and a chorus of strikers bellowing the banned word *scab*.
 He was not a striker or a scab, but the bullet fired to scatter
 the crowd pulled the cork in the wine barrel of Valentino's back.
 His body, pale as the wings of a moth, lay beside his big-bellied wife.

Two white-veiled horses pulled the carriage to the cemetery.
 Twenty thousand strikers walked behind the hearse, flooding
 the avenue like the river that lit up the mills, surging around
 the tombstones. *Blood for blood*, cried Tresca: at his signal,
 thousands of hands dropped red carnations and ribbons
 into the grave, till the coffin evaporated in a red sea.

III. THE INSECTS IN THE SOUP

Reed was a Harvard man. He wrote for the New York magazines.
 Big Bill, the organizer, fixed his one good eye on Reed and told him
 of the strike. He stood on a tenement porch across from the mill

to escape the rain and listen to the weavers. The bluecoats told him to move on. The Harvard man asked for a name to go with the number on the badge, and the cops tried to unscrew his arms from their sockets. When the judge asked his business, Reed said: *Poet*. The judge said: *Twenty days in the county jail*.

Reed was a Harvard man. He taught the strikers Harvard songs, the tunes to sing with rebel words at the gates of the mill. The strikers taught him how to spot the insects in the soup, speaking in tongues the gospel of One Big Union and the eight-hour day, cramming the jail till the weary jailers had to unlock the doors. Reed would write: *There's war in Paterson*. After it was over, he rode with Pancho Villa.

IV. THE LITTLE AGITATOR

The cops on horseback charged into the picket line. The weavers raised their hands across their faces, hands that knew the loom as their fathers' hands knew the loom, and the billy clubs broke their fingers. Hannah was seventeen, the captain of the picket line, the Joan of Arc of the Silk Strike. The prosecutor called her *a little agitator*. *Shame*, said the judge; if she picketed again he would ship her to the State Home for Girls in Trenton.

Hannah left the courthouse to picket the mill. She chased a strikebreaker down the street, yelling in Yiddish the word for shame. Back in court, she hissed at the judge's sentence of another striker. Hannah got twenty days in jail for hissing. She sang all the way to jail. After the strike came the blacklist, the counter at her husband's candy store, the words for shame.

V. VIVAS TO THOSE WHO HAVE FAILED

Strikers without shoes lose strikes. Twenty years after the weavers and dyers' helpers returned hollow-eyed to the loom and the steam, Mazziotti led the other silk mill workers marching down the avenue in Paterson, singing the old union songs for five cents more an hour. Once again the nightsticks cracked cheekbones like teacups. Mazziotti pressed both hands to his head, squeezing red ribbons from his scalp. There would be no Buffalo nickel for an hour's work at the mill, for the silk of bow ties and scarves. Skull remembered wood.

The brain thrown against the wall of the skull remembered too:
 the Sons of Italy, the Workmen's Circle, Local 152, Industrial
 Workers of the World, one-eyed Big Bill and Flynn the Rebel Girl
 speaking in tongues to thousands the prophecy of an eight-hour day.
 Mazziotti's son would become a doctor, his daughter a poet.
 Vivas to those who have failed: for they become the river.

7.4 Factotum

CHARLES BUKOWSKI

I arrived in New Orleans in the rain at 5 o'clock in the morning. I sat around in the bus station for a while but the people depressed me so I took my suitcase and went out in the rain and began walking. I didn't know where the rooming houses were, where the poor section was.

"I was so ashamed. To think, my own son in prison. . . . It's bad enough you don't want to serve your country in time of War . . ." "The shrink said I was unfit. . . . Do you have a cigarette?" "Now you've been jailed. A thing like this could kill your mother." We passed some cheap bars on lower Broadway. "Let's go in and catch a drink." "What? You mean you'd dare drink right after getting out of jail for intoxication?" "That's when you need a drink the most. . . . I need a piece of ass too." "What?" "I said, I need a piece of ass too." He nearly ran a red light. We drove in silence. "By the way," he said finally, "I guess you know that the jail fine will be added to your room, board and laundry bill?"

Two old guys were waiting for me. I met them down inside the subway where the cars were parked. I was given an armful of cardboard posters and a small metal instrument that looked like a can opener. We all climbed in one of the parked cars.

We worked our way down to the end of the car. The two old men climbed off the back, began to walk toward the next subway car parked about fifty feet up the track. We were forty feet above the ground with nothing but railroad ties to walk on. I saw it wouldn't be any trouble at all for a body to slip through and fall to the ground below.

The hours at the dog biscuit factory were from 4:30 P.M. to 1 A.M. I was given a dirty white apron and heavy canvas gloves. The gloves were burned and had holes in them. I could see my fingers peeking through. I was given instructions by a toothless elf with a film over his left eye; the film was

white-and-green with spidery blue lines. He had been on the job nineteen years. I advanced to my post. A whistle blew and the machinery leaped into action. Dog biscuits began to move. The dough was stamped into shape and then placed on heavy metal screens with iron edges. I grabbed a screen, placed it in the oven behind me. I turned. There was the next screen. There was no way to slow them down. The only time they stopped was when something snagged the machinery. It didn't happen often. When it did, the Elf got it going quickly.

On such jobs men become tired. They experience a weariness beyond fatigue. They say mad, brilliant things. Out of my head, I cussed and talked and cracked jokes and sang. Hell boils with laughter. Even the Elf laughed at me. I worked for several weeks. I came in drunk each night. It didn't matter; I had the job nobody wanted. After an hour at the oven I was sober. My hands were blistered and burned. Each day I sat aching in my room pricking my blisters with pins I first sterilized with matches.

I found a job as a shipping clerk in a ladies' dresswear shop. Even during World War II when there was supposed to be a manpower shortage there were four or five applicants for each job. (At least for the menial jobs.) We waited with our application forms filled out. Born? Single? Married? Draft status? Last job? Last jobs? Why did you leave? I had filled out so many job forms that long ago I had memorized the right answers. . . . A bald man with strange tufts of hair over each ear interviewed me.

The problem, as it was in those days during the war, was overtime. Those in control always preferred to overwork a few men continually, instead of hiring more people so everyone might work less. You gave the boss eight hours, and he always asked for more. He never sent you home after six hours, for example. You might have time to think.

After losing several typewriters to pawnbrokers I simply gave up the idea of owning one. I printed out my stories by hand and sent them out that way.

I sent most of them to Clay Gladmore, whose New York mag *Frontfire* I admired. They only paid \$25 a story but Gladmore had discovered William Saroyan and many others, had been Sherwood Anderson's buddy. Gladmore returned many of my things with personal rejections. True, most of them weren't very long but they did seem kind and they were encouraging. The larger magazines used printed rejection slips. Even Gladmore's printed slips seemed to have some warmth to them: "We regret, alas, that this is a rejection slip but . . ."

Overtime became automatic. I drank more and more in my off hours. The eight hour day was gone forever. In the morning when you walked in you might as well settle for at least eleven hours. This included Saturdays, which used to be half-days, but which had turned into full days. The war was on but the ladies were buying the hell out of dresses . . .

That scene in the office stayed with me. Those cigars, the fine clothes. I thought of good steaks, long rides up winding driveways that led to beautiful homes. Ease. Trips to Europe. Fine women. Were they that much more clever than I? The only difference was money, and the desire to accumulate it. I'd do it too! I'd save my pennies. I'd get an idea, I'd spring a loan. I'd hire and fire. I'd keep whiskey in my desk drawer. I'd have a wife with size 40 breasts and an ass that would make the paperboy on the corner come in his pants when he saw it wobble. I'd cheat on her and she'd know it and keep silent in order to live in my house with my wealth. I'd fire men just to see the look of dismay on their faces. I'd fire women who didn't deserve to be fired. That was all a man needed: hope. It was lack of hope that discouraged a man. I remembered my New Orleans days, living on two five-cent candy bars a day for weeks at a time in order to have leisure to write. But starvation, unfortunately, didn't improve art. It only hindered it. A man's soul was rooted in his stomach. A man could write much better after eating a porterhouse steak and drinking a pint of whiskey than he could ever write after eating a nickel candy bar. The myth of the starving artist was a hoax. Once you realized that everything was a hoax you got wise and began to bleed and burn your fellow man. I'd build an empire upon the broken bodies and lives of helpless men, women, and children—I'd shove it to them all the way. *I'd show them!*

The thought of sitting in front of a man behind a desk and telling him that I wanted a job, that I was qualified for a job, was too much for me. Frankly, I was horrified by life, at what a man had to do simply in order to eat, sleep, and keep himself clothed. So I stayed in bed and drank.

The arguments were always the same. I understood it too well now—that great lovers were always men of leisure. I fucked better as a bum than as a puncher of timeclocks.

“Sit down, Chinaski.” On the center of the desk was a check, face down. I slid the check face down along the glass top of the desk and without looking at it I slipped it in my wallet. “You knew we were going to let you go?” “Bosses are never hard to fathom.” “Chinaski, you haven't been pulling your

weight for a month and you know it.” “A guy busts his damned ass and you don’t appreciate it.” “You haven’t been busting your ass, Chinaski.” I stared down at my shoes for some time. I didn’t know what to say. Then I looked at him. “I’ve given you my time. It’s all I’ve got to give—it’s all any man has. And for a pitiful buck and a quarter an hour.” “Remember you begged for this job. You said your job was your second home.” “. . . my time so that you can live in your big house on the hill and have all the things that go with it. If anybody has lost anything on this deal, on this arrangement . . . I’ve been the loser. Do you understand?” “All right, Chinaski.” “All right?” “Yes. Just go.” . . . “Mantz, I want my unemployment insurance. I don’t want any trouble about that. You guys are always trying to cheat a working man out of his rights. So don’t give me any trouble or I’ll be back to see you.” “You’ll get your insurance. Now get the hell out of here!” I got the hell out of there.

I had my winnings and the bookie money and I just sat around and Jan liked that. After two weeks I was on unemployment and we relaxed and fucked and toured the bars and every week I’d go down to the California State Department of Employment and stand in line and get my nice little check.

The Florida State Department of Employment was a pleasant place. It wasn’t as crowded as the Los Angeles office which was always full. It was my turn for a little good luck, not much, but a little. It was true that I didn’t have much ambition, but there ought to be a place for people without ambition, I mean a better place than the one usually reserved. How in the hell could a man enjoy being awakened at 6:30 A.M. by an alarm clock, leap out of bed, dress, force-feed, shit, piss, brush teeth and hair, and fight traffic to get to a place where essentially you made lots of money for somebody else and were asked to be grateful for the opportunity to do so?

The clerk ran his fingers through his little card file. He pulled one out. “Ah, here’s a job for you.” “Yes?” He looked up. “Sanitation Worker.” “What?” “Garbage man.” “I don’t want it.” I shuddered at the thought of all that garbage, the morning hangovers, blacks laughing at me, the impossible weight of the cans, and me pukeing my guts into the orange rinds, coffee grounds, wet cigarette ashes, banana peels and the used tampax. “What’s the matter? Not good enough for you? It’s 40 hours. And security. A lifetime of security.” “You take that job and I’ll take yours.” Silence. “I’m trained for this job.” “Are you? I spent two years in college. Is that a prerequisite to pick up garbage?”

I found a job through the newspaper. I was hired by a clothing store but it wasn’t in Miami it was in Miami Beach, and I had to take my hangover across the water each morning. The bus ran along a very narrow strip of cement

that stood up out of the water with no guard-rail, no nothing; that's all there was to it. The bus driver leaned back and we roared along over this narrow cement strip surrounded by water and all the people in the bus, the twenty-five or forty or fifty-two people trusted him, but I never did. Sometimes it was a new driver, and I thought, how do they select these sons of bitches? There's deep water on both sides of us and with one error of judgement he'll kill us all. It was ridiculous. Suppose he had an argument with his wife that morning? Or cancer? Or visions of God? Bad teeth? Anything. He could do it. Dump us all. I knew that if I was driving that *I* would consider the possibility or desirability of drowning everybody. And sometimes, after just such considerations, possibility turns into reality. For each Joan of Arc there is a Hitler perched at the other end of the teeter-totter. The old story of good and evil. But none of the bus drivers ever dumped us. They were thinking instead of car payments, baseball scores, haircuts, vacations, enemas, family visits. There wasn't a real man in the whole shitload. I always got to work sick but safe.

It was a completely self-sufficient, self-contained clothing store, factory and retail business combined. The showroom, the finished product and the salesmen were all downstairs, and the factory was up above. The factory was a maze of catwalks and runways that even the rats couldn't crawl, long narrow lofts with men and women sitting and working under thirty watt bulbs, squinting, treading pedals, threading needles, never looking up or speaking, bent and quiet, doing it. At one time one of my jobs in New York City had been to take bolts of fabric up to lofts like this. I would roll my hand truck in the busy street, pushing it through traffic, then into an alley behind some grimy building. There would be a dark elevator and I'd have to pull on ropes with stained round wooden spools attached. One rope meant up, another rope signaled down. There was no light and as the elevator climbed slowly I'd watch in the dark for white numbers written on the bare walls—3, 7, 9, scrawled in chalk by some forgotten hand. I'd reach my floor, tug on another rope with my fingers and using all my strength slowly slide open the heavy old metal door, revealing row upon row of old Jewish ladies at their machines, laboring over piecework; the number one seamstress at the #1 machine, bent on maintaining her place; the number two girl at the #2 machine, ready to replace her should she falter. They never looked up or in any way acknowledged my presence as I entered.

The packing lists were never wrong probably because the guy at the other end was too frightened for his job to be careless. Usually he is on the seventh of thirty-six payments for his new car, his wife is taking a ceramics class on Monday night, the interest on his mortgage is eating him alive, and each one of his five kids drinks a quart of milk a day.

I got hired immediately at a fluorescent light fixture company. It was up on Alameda Street, to the north, in a cluster of warehouses. I was the shipping clerk.

Feldman was trying to collect his insurance and go bankrupt at the same time. The next morning a dignified looking man came down from the Bank of America. He told us not to build any more racks. “Just stack that shit on the floor,” was the way he put it. His name was Jennings, Curtis Jennings. Feldman owed the Bank of America a lot of money and the Bank of America wanted its money back before the business went under. . . .

Within three days Jennings fired a man who worked in the front office and replaced three men on the assembly line with three young Mexican girls willing to work for half the pay. He fired the janitor and, along with doing the shipping, had me driving the company truck on local deliveries.

I was in some kind of storage loft. That room had the highest ceiling I had ever seen. The ladder stood thirty-six feet high. I had always had a fear of heights. I took a new light tube and slowly mounted the ladder. I had to remind myself again, try not to think. I climbed upwards. The fluorescent tubes were about five feet long. They broke easily and were hard to handle. When I reached the top of the ladder I peered down. That was a big mistake. A dizzy spell swept over me. I was a coward. I was up against a big window on one of the upper floors. I imagined myself falling off the ladder and out through the window, down through space until I hit the street. I watched the tiny automobiles cross back and forth down in the street below me, their headlights bright in the night. Then, very slowly, I reached up and removed a burnt out fluorescent light. I replaced it with a new light. Then I climbed down, feeling more relief with each step downward. When I reached the ground I promised myself that I’d never get on that ladder again.

The brake parts man took me up a narrow stairway. George Henley was his name: George showed me my workroom, very small, dark, just one lightbulb and one tiny window that looked out over an alley. “Now,” he said, “you see these cartons. You put the brake shoes into the cartons. Like this.” Mr. Henley showed me. “We have three types of cartons, each printed differently. One carton is for our ‘Super Durable Brake Shoe.’ The other is for our ‘Super Brake Shoe.’ And the third is for our ‘Standard Brake Shoe.’ The brake shoes are stacked right here.” “But they all look alike to me. How can I tell them apart?” “You don’t. They’re all the same. Just divide them into thirds. . . .”

I had visited the American Cancer Society earlier, as I had understood it to be free. I had lumps all over my body, dizzy spells, I was spitting blood, and

I had gone there only to be given an appointment for three weeks later. Now like every American boy I had always been told: *catch cancer early*. Then you go down to catch it early and they make you wait three weeks for an appointment. That's the difference between what we're told and actuality. After three weeks I went back and they told me they could give me certain tests free, but that I could pass these tests and wouldn't really be sure that I didn't have cancer. However, if I gave them \$25 and passed that test, I could be *fairly* sure I didn't have cancer. To be *absolutely* sure, after I had taken the \$25 test, I would have to take the \$75 test, and if I passed that one too, I could relax. It would mean my trouble was alcoholism or nerves or the clap. They talk real good and clear, those kittens in the white coats at the American Cancer Society, and I said, in other words, \$100. Umm hum, they said, and I walked out and went on a three day toot and all the lumps vanished along with the dizzy spells and the blood spitting.

Now in those days the L.A. River was a fake—there was no water, just a wide, flat, dry cement runway. The bums lived down there by the hundreds in little cement alcoves under the bridges and overpasses. Some of them even had potted plants in front of their places. All they needed to live like kings was canned heat (Sterno) and what they picked out of the nearby garbage dump. They were tan and relaxed and most of them looked a hell of a lot healthier than the average Los Angeles business man. Those guys down there had no problems with women, income tax, landlords, burial expenses, dentists, time payments, car repairs, or with climbing into a voting booth and pulling the curtain closed.

I thought it was very nice that there were so many job openings, yet it worried me too—we'd probably be pitted against one another in some way. Survival of the fittest. There were always men looking for jobs in America. There were always all these usable bodies.

National Bakery Goods was located nearby. They gave me a white smock and a locker. They made cookies, biscuits, cupcakes and so forth. Because I had claimed two years of college on my application, I got the job as Coconut Man. The Coconut Man stood up on a perch, scooped his shovel into the shredded coconut barrel and dumped the white flakes into a machine.

NOTE

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7.5 Interview with Robert Greenwald

JOHN ASIMAKOPOULOS

Q. Which filmmakers or thinkers have influenced your work?

A. Coppola, Truffaut, Errol Morris.

Q. What inspires you?

A. The chance to be part of this thing called democracy, particularly participatory democracy—the participation of people, outside the confines of the voting booth—in shaping their world for the better and in creating moments where transformational change is possible.

Q. What led you to film and activist documentaries?

A. I started in theater, then moved to film/TV when I moved to Los Angeles. After achieving some success, I started thinking about what I wanted next, and I realized it was to be part of something far beyond entertainment, something transformational. The work I was proudest of having made told stories that needed to be told, gave ordinary people—viewers—a new way of looking at things and possibly gave them some new sense of their own power to make change. This was work like *The Burning Bed* and *Steal This Movie*, that told real-life stories. So when the opportunity came for me to work on a documentary, I grabbed at it. And I fell in love, instantly and deeply.

Q. How do your films address such matters as government corruption, plutonomy, equality, and so on?

A. I look at all the issues we work on through the lens of personal stories. I try to tell stories that show why government corruption matters—even if you are not personally hurt by it, for example. I believe strongly that the personal aspect is the key first step—the barrier to be breached if we are to move forward in changing public policy. First you reach the audience’s heart, and then it is possible to connect with their intellect—the brain, because they are listening. Then—because you are telling the truth in a way that they are now ready to fully understand—you’ve got them. Usually, once they know the truth, they are angry—or at least motivated.

Q. What is your conception of social justice?

A. Social justice is not equity of outcome but equity of opportunity. It is a system in which everyone has the same chances, regardless of who they are, where they live, how they got to this country, the color of their skin, and all

those other identity factors that should not determine what is possible for a child in America but fundamentally still do.

Q. How do you conceive the role of art and filmmaking in the social justice movement?

A. In the long tradition of art and social justice from music to murals, through the years, art can inspire and inform. Film has a unique and critical role given the power of images and given the incredible distribution opportunities today.

Q. Are justice and fairness compatible with neoliberalism?

A. I prefer to keep my focus on what can be done and not be limited by any ideology or construct. I believe, fundamentally, that things can be better and that as humans we have a moral obligation to work toward that end.

Q. Does your work envision a move toward European-style socialist democracy? Regulated capitalism? Direct forms of democracy/community decision making?

A. Our work is not about creating a government structure. It is about giving people the information they need, in a way they can absorb, to understand how the structures we do have really work, like our Walmart film, or our film about war profiteering or the Koch brothers. We hope it puts a narrative structure—a hero, a villain, a quest—around some fundamental lessons in how capitalism works. From there, people can take that information and use it as a scaffolding on which to hang their own actions. The idea is to push people toward a moment of transformational change but not to dictate what the moment looks like.

Q. What kind of actions should people take?

A. We never choose for people. What we do is provide a menu of actions/groups that we have on our website. They run the gamut from social action movement building to electoral action and everything in between. We build a ladder of engagement that people can choose to climb at whatever speed they wish, or can choose to linger on near the bottom. Everyone brings different skills and passions and time and resources to the fights we are having, and all of them are valuable.

Q. How does the mass/corporate media shape the democratic process and civic engagement?

A. The mass media reinforces the basic values of the existing system. Our job is to go to the darkness, to go where the questions are not being asked,

to go where the issues are not being debated, and to raise those, loudly and clearly.

Q. Is social justice possible through the formal political process and institutions?

A. Through our films and campaigns we give people a range of options, so that they can make the decision . . . formal political process or on-the-ground activism, traditional institution or renegade. . . .

Q. Are there more effective means of change outside of formal political structures? If so, provide examples.

A. We offer the range of opportunities, and I do not see it as our role to choose. And therefore we include a variety of ways for social change in our work and our partners. Formal political structures may work. Civic disobediences or civil resistance may work. The important thing is that proverbial tipping point, the moment at which the unacceptable in theory becomes truly unacceptable in practice. We want to help people reach that point—enough people to matter.

Q. How does your work prompt change? How is film a medium for social justice in general?

A. Films support social change by providing both factual information and a story that makes that information meaningful, palatable, relatable. It is the spoonful of sugar that helps hard lessons go down, get absorbed, and eventually spark emotion that in turn sparks activism.

Q. How does film surpass other media such as blogs, literature, academic books, and so on? What are the limitations of film?

A. Film is visual and therefore visceral. This is a big plus. Others can be more intellectually rigorous, but our work can point people toward those platforms, get them to open the books, read the blogs, and continue to learn. Film can be the spark.

Q. What challenges do you face in your work?

A. Funding. Reaching an audience in a world where hundreds of millions of dollars are routinely spent reaching an audience.

Q. What is your experience with financing and distribution channels? Do you engage in crowdsourcing, direct sales, and so on? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these methods for activists?

A. We were crowdsourcing before it had a name. In fact, we were the first to use it to fund-raise a film. It is liberating not to have to rely on gatekeepers

either for funding or for distribution. It is also an insane amount of work and effort to figure out distribution in a world where it is changing every minute. For example, how does Snapchat work to advance social messages? What is a platform that is going to actually attract thoughtful interaction, and what is, basically, a toy? It is a daily adventure. And to raise funds in a highly competitive universe gets more and more challenging.

Q. What is your view of technology? Is it a means of greater social control or a potential tool of empowerment and liberation?

A. Technology itself is neutral. How you use it is what matters. We are able to do the work we do because of technology—because of the ability to film and edit but also because of the ability to share that work in a way that was inconceivable when I started in film.

Q. Which of your works are you most proud of and why?

A. I am always most proud of my latest. In this case, *Making a Killing: Guns, Greed, and the NRA*.

Q. What are your most significant accomplishments as an activist?

A. Changing the way people feel and think about the Iraq war, Fox, Walmart, the Koch brothers, the Afghanistan war, whistleblowers, drones, and soon the NRA. . . . The first step is changing the thinking through the heart, and then comes action and the transformation.

Q. What is your advice to young people who want social change? How can people get involved with your organization?

A. If you want social change, make it happen. No one can do it for you. Take risks. There are so many different ways. To get involved with Brave New Films, go to our website, look around, and figure out how you want to be involved. Volunteer, or screen one of our films at school or church, or take one of our films to a local newspaper, or use a film to show to elected officials. Tweet it, talk about it, share it on social media and at cocktail parties. Learn things. Know things. Then use that knowledge to hold people accountable.

ADDITIONAL FULL-LENGTH DOCUMENTARIES BY ROBERT GREENWALD

Uncovered: The War on Iraq (2004)

Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism (2004)

Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price (2005)

Iraq for Sale: The War Profiteers (2006)

Rethink Afghanistan (2009)

Koch Brothers Exposed (2012)

War on Whistleblowers: Free Press and the National Security State (2013)

Unmanned: America's Drone Wars (2013)

7.6 Sound of da Police

KRS-ONE

Woop-woop!

That's the sound of da police!

Woop-woop!

That's the sound of the beast!

Stand clear! Don man a-talk

You can't stand where I stand, you can't walk where I walk

Watch out! We run New York

Police man come, we bust him out the park

I know this for a fact, you don't like how I act

You claim I'm sellin' crack

But you be doin' that

I'd rather say "see ya"

'Cause I would never be ya

Be a officer? You *wicked* overseer!

Ya hotshot, wanna get props and be a saviour

First show a little respect, change your behavior

Change your attitude, change your plan

There could never really be justice on stolen land

Are you really for peace and equality?

Or when my car is hooked up, you know you wanna follow me

Your laws are minimal

'Cause you won't even think about lookin' at the real criminal

This has got to cease

'Cause we be getting *hyped* to the sound of da police!

Woop-woop!

That's the sound of da police!

Woop-woop!

That's the sound of the beast!

Now here's a likkle truth

Open up your eye

While you're checking out the boom-bap, check the exercise
 Take the word "overseer," like a sample
 Repeat it very quickly in a crew for example
 Overseer
 Overseer
 Overseer
 Overseer
 Officer, Officer, Officer, Officer!
 Yeah, officer from overseer
 You need a little clarity?
 Check the similarity!
 The overseer rode around the plantation
 The officer is off patrolling all the nation
 The overseer could stop you what you're doing
 The officer will pull you over just when he's pursuing
 The overseer had the right to get ill
 And if you fought back, the overseer had the right to kill
 The officer has the right to arrest
 And if you fight back they put a hole in your chest!
 (Woop!) They both ride horses
 After 400 years, I've got no choices!
 The police them have a little gun
 So when I'm on the streets, I walk around with a bigger one
 (Woop-woop!) I hear it all day
 Just so they can run the light and be upon their way

Woop-woop!
 That's the sound of da police!
 Woop-woop!
 That's the sound of the beast!

Check out the message in a rough stylee
 The real criminals are the C-O-P
 You check for undercover and the one PD
 But just a mere Black man, them want check me
 Them check out me car for it shine like the sun
 But them jealous or them vexed cause them can't afford one
 Black people still slaves up 'til today
 But the Black police officer nah see it that way
 Him want a salary
 Him want it

So he put on a badge and kill people for it
My grandfather had to deal with the cops
My great-grandfather dealt with the cops
My *great* grandfather had to deal with the cops
And then my great, great, great, great—when it's gonna stop?!

Woop-woop!
That's the sound of da police!
Woop-woop!
That's the sound of the beast!

NOTE

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8 | Ecology

Ecology must stop being associated with the image of a small nature-loving minority or with qualified specialists. Ecology in my sense questions the whole of subjectivity and capitalistic power formations, whose sweeping progress cannot be guaranteed to continue as it has for the past decade.

—Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*

8.1 What Is Social Ecology?

MURRAY BOOKCHIN

Social ecology is based on the conviction that nearly all of our present ecological problems originate in deep-seated social problems. It follows, from this view, that these ecological problems cannot be understood, let alone solved, without a careful understanding of our existing society and the irrationalities that dominate it. To make this point more concrete: economic, ethnic, cultural, and gender conflicts, among many others, lie at the core of the most serious ecological dislocations we face today—apart, to be sure, from those that are produced by natural catastrophes. . . . The massive oil spills that have occurred over the past two decades, the extensive deforestation of tropical forest and magnificent ancient trees in temperate areas, and vast hydroelectric projects that flood places where people live, to cite only a few problems, are sobering reminders that the real battleground on which the ecological future of the planet will be decided is clearly a social one, particularly between corporate power and the long-range interests of humanity as a whole. . . .

Indeed, to separate ecological problems from social problems—or even to play down or give only token recognition to their crucial relationship—would be to grossly misconstrue the sources of the growing environmental crisis. In effect, the way human beings deal with each other as social beings is crucial to addressing the ecological crisis. Unless we clearly recognize this, we will fail to see that the hierarchical mentality and class relationships that so thoroughly permeate society are what has given rise to the very idea of dominating the natural world.

Unless we realize that the present market society, structured around the brutally competitive imperative of “grow or die,” is a thoroughly impersonal, self-operating mechanism, we will falsely tend to blame other phenomena—such as technology or population growth—for growing environmental dislocations. We will ignore their *root* causes, such as trade for profit, industrial expansion for its own sake, and the identification of progress with corporate self-interest. In short, we will tend to focus on the *symptoms* of a grim social pathology rather than on the pathology itself, and our efforts will be directed toward limited goals whose attainment is more cosmetic than curative. . . .

At a time when a blind social mechanism—the market—is turning soil into sand, covering fertile land with concrete, poisoning air and water, and producing sweeping climatic and atmospheric changes, we cannot ignore the impact that an aggressive hierarchical and exploitative class society has on the natural world. We must face the fact that economic growth, gender oppressions, and ethnic domination—not to speak of corporate, state, and bureaucratic incursions on human well-being—are much more capable of shaping the future of the natural world than are privatistic forms of spiritual self-redemption. These forms of domination must be confronted by collective action and by major social movements that challenge the social sources of the ecological crisis, not simply by personalistic forms of consumption and investment that often go under the oxymoronic rubric of “green capitalism.” The present highly co-optative society is only too eager to find new means of commercial aggrandizement and to add ecological verbiage to its advertising and customer relations efforts. . . .

Social ecology calls on us to see that the natural world and the social are interlinked by evolution into one nature that consists of two differentiations: first or biotic nature, and second or social nature. Social nature and biotic nature share an evolutionary potential for greater subjectivity and flexibility. Second nature is the way in which human beings, as flexible, highly intelligent primates, inhabit and alter the natural world. That is to say, people create an environment that is most suitable for their mode of existence. In this respect, second nature is no different from the environment that every animal, depending on its abilities, partially creates as well as primarily adapts to—the biophysical circumstances or ecocommunity in which it must live. . . .

Human beings, emerging from an organic evolutionary process, initiate, by the sheer force of their biological and survival needs, a social evolutionary development that clearly involves their organic evolutionary process. Owing to their naturally endowed intelligence, powers of communication, capacity for institutional organization, and relative freedom from instinctive behavior, they refashion their environment—and also nonhuman beings—to the full extent that their biological equipment allows. This equipment makes it pos-

sible for them to engage not only in social life but in social development. . . . The extent to which they contribute to biotic evolution or abort it and the damage they inflict on the planet as a whole lie at the very heart of the modern ecological crisis. . . .

How, then, did the social emerge from the biological? . . . The lineage or blood tie in early prehistory obviously formed the organic basis of the family. Indeed, it joined together groups of families into bands, clans, and tribes, through either intermarriage or fictive forms of descent, thereby forming the readiest social horizon of our ancestors. . . .

Hierarchy in its earliest forms was probably not marked by the harsh qualities it has acquired over history. Elders, at the very beginnings of gerontocracy, were not only respected for their wisdom but often beloved of the young, with affection that was often reciprocated in kind. We can probably account for the increasing harshness of later gerontocracies by supposing that the elderly, burdened by their failing physical powers and dependent on their community's goodwill, were more vulnerable to abandonment in periods of material want than any other part of the population. . . .

Initially, the emergence of patricentricity may have been a useful adjunct to a life deeply rooted in the primordial natural world; preliterate and early aboriginal societies were essentially small domestic communities in which the authentic center of material life was the home, not the "men's house" so widely present in later, more elaborate tribal societies. . . . The authority and prerogative of the male are the product of a long, often subtly negotiated development in which the male fraternity edges out the female sorority by virtue of the former's growing "civil" responsibilities. Increasing population, marauding bands of outsiders whose migrations may be induced by drought or other unfavorable conditions, and vendettas of one kind or another, to cite common causes of hostility or war, create a new "civil" sphere side by side with woman's domestic sphere, and the former gradually encroaches on the latter. With the appearance of cattle-drawn plow agriculture, the male, who is the "master of the beasts," begins to invade the horticultural sphere of woman, whose primacy as the food cultivator and food gatherer gives her cultural preeminence in the community's internal life, slowly diluting her preeminence. Warrior societies and chiefdoms carry the momentum of male dominance to the level of a new material and cultural dispensation. Male dominance becomes extremely active and ultimately yields a world in which male elites dominate not only women but also, in the form of classes, other men.

The causes of the emergence of hierarchy are transparent enough: the infirmities of age, increasing population numbers, natural disasters, technological changes that privileged activities of hunting and animal husbandry

over horticultural responsibilities, the growth of civil society, and the spread of warfare. All served to enhance the male's standing at the expense of the female's.

It must be emphasized that hierarchical domination, however coercive it may be, is not the same thing as class exploitation. . . . The respect accorded to many chiefs is earned, not by hoarding surpluses as a source of power but by disposing of them as evidence of generosity. By contrast, classes tend to operate along different lines. In class societies power is usually gained by the acquisition of wealth, not by its disposal; rulership is guaranteed by outright physical coercion, not simply by persuasion; and the state is the ultimate guarantor of authority. . . .

Of primary importance among early customs was the principle of the irreducible minimum (to use Paul Radin's expression), the shared notion that all members of the same community are entitled to the means of life, irrespective of the amount of work they perform. To deny anyone food, shelter, and the basic means of life because of their infirmities or even their frivolous behavior would have been seen as a heinous denial of the very right to live. Nor were the basic resources needed to sustain the community ever permitted to be privately owned; overriding individualistic control was the broader principle of usufruct—the notion that the means of life that were not being used by one group could be used, as needed, by another. Thus unused land, orchards, and even tools and weapons, if left idle, were often at the disposition of anyone in the community who needed them. Lastly, custom fostered the practice of mutual aid, the rather sensible cooperative sharing of things and labor, so that an individual or family in straitened circumstances could expect to be helped by others. Taken as a whole, these customs became so sedimented into organic society that they persisted long after hierarchy became oppressive and class society became predominant. . . .

With the rise of hierarchy and domination, . . . the seeds were planted for the belief that first nature exists not only as a world that is increasingly distinguishable from the community but as one that is hierarchically organized and can be dominated by human beings. . . . The idea of dominating nature has a history that is almost as old as that of hierarchy itself. Already in the Gilgamesh epic of Mesopotamia, a drama whose written form dates back some four thousand years, the hero defies the deities and cuts down their sacred trees in his quest for immortality. The *Odyssey* is a vast travelogue of the Greek warrior, more canny than heroic, who in his wanderings essentially subdues the nature deities that the Hellenic world had inherited from its less well-known precursors (ironically, the dark pre-Olympian world that has been revived by purveyors of eco-mysticism and spiritualism). Long before the emergence of modern science, . . . hierarchical and class societies laid

waste to much of the Mediterranean basin as well as the hillsides of China, beginning a vast remaking and often despoliation of the planet. . . .

However troubling the ills produced by second nature, the customs of the irreducible minimum, usufruct, and mutual aid cannot be ignored in any account of anthropology and history. These customs persisted well into historical times and surfaced sometimes explosively in massive popular uprisings, from revolts in ancient Sumer to the present time. Many of those revolts demanded the recovery of caring and communistic values, at times when these were coming under the onslaught of elitist and class oppression. Indeed, despite the armies that roamed the landscape of warring areas, the tax gatherers who plundered ordinary village peoples, and the daily abuses that overseers inflicted on peasants and workers, community life still persisted and retained many of the cherished values of a more egalitarian past. Neither ancient despots nor feudal lords could fully obliterate them in peasant villages and in the towns with independent craft associations. . . .

Just as hierarchies and class structures had acquired momentum and permeated much of society, so too the market began to acquire a life of its own and extended its reach beyond a few limited regions into the depths of vast continents. Where exchange had once been primarily a means to provide for essential needs, limited by guilds or by moral and religious restrictions, long-distance trade subverted those limits. Not only did trade place a high premium on techniques for increasing production; it also became the progenitor of new needs, many of them wholly artificial, and gave a tremendous impetus to consumption and the growth of capital. First in northern Italy and the European lowlands, and later—and most decisively—in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the production of goods exclusively for sale and profit (the production of the capitalistic commodity) rapidly swept aside all cultural and social barriers to market growth.

By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the new industrial capitalist class, with its factory system and commitment to limitless expansion, had embarked on its colonization of the entire world, including most aspects of personal life. Unlike the feudal nobility, with its cherished lands and castles, the bourgeoisie had no home but the marketplace and its bank vaults. As a class, it turned more and more of the world into a domain of factories. . . . The industrial capitalists of the modern world spawned a bitterly competitive marketplace that placed a high premium on industrial expansion and the commercial power it conferred, functioning as though growth were an end in itself. . . .

Despite the close association between capitalist development and technological innovation, the most driving imperative of any enterprise in the harshly capitalist marketplace, given the dehumanizing competition that

prevails there, is the need of an enterprise to grow in order to avoid perishing at the hands of its savage rivals. Important as even greed may be as a motivating force, sheer survival requires that the entrepreneur must expand his or her productive apparatus in order to remain ahead of others. Each capitalist, in short, must try to devour his or her rivals—or else be devoured by them. The key to this law of life—to survival—is expansion, and the quest for ever-greater profits, to be invested, in turn, in still further expansion. Indeed, the notion of progress, once regarded as faith in the evolution of greater human cooperation and care, is now identified with ever greater competition and reckless economic growth. . . .

However ecologically well-meaning an entrepreneur may be, the harsh fact is that his or her very survival in the marketplace precludes the development of a meaningful ecological orientation. The adoption of ecologically sound practices places a morally concerned entrepreneur at a striking and indeed fatal disadvantage in a competitive relationship with a rival—who, operating without ecological guidelines and moral constraints, produces cheap commodities at lower costs and reaps higher profits for further capital expansion. The marketplace has its own law of survival: only the most unscrupulous can rise to the top of that competitive struggle.

Indeed, to the extent that environmental movements and ideologies merely moralize about the wickedness of our anti-ecological society and call for changes in personal lifestyles and attitudes, they obscure the need for concerted social action and tend to deflect the struggle for far-reaching social change. Meanwhile, corporations are skillfully manipulating this popular desire for personal ecologically sound practices by cultivating ecological mirages. . . . The point social ecology emphasizes is not that moral or spiritual persuasion and renewal are meaningless or unnecessary; they are necessary and can be educational.

But modern capitalism is structurally amoral and hence impervious to moral appeals. The modern marketplace is driven by imperatives of its own, irrespective of what kind of CEO sits in a corporation's driver's seat or holds on to its handlebars. The direction it follows depends not on ethical prescriptions and personal inclinations but on objective laws of profit or loss, growth or death, eat or be eaten, and the like. The maxim "Business is business" explicitly tells us that ethical, religious, psychological, and emotional factors have virtually no place in the predatory world of production, profit, and growth. It is grossly misleading to think that we can divest this harsh, indeed mechanistic world of its objective characteristics by means of ethical appeals. A society based on the law of "grow or die" as its all-pervasive imperative must of necessity have a devastating impact on first nature. . . .

Social ecology is an appeal for moral regeneration but, and above all, for social reconstruction along ecological lines. It seeks to redress the ecological abuses that the prevailing society has inflicted on the natural world by going to the structural as well as the subjective sources of notions like the domination of first nature. That is, it challenges the entire system of domination itself—its economy, its misuse of technics, its administrative apparatus, its degradations of political life, its destruction of the city as a center of cultural development, indeed the entire panoply of its moral hypocrisies and defiling of the human spirit—and seeks to eliminate the hierarchical and class edifices that have imposed themselves on humanity and defined the relationship between nonhuman and human nature. . . .

It advances an ethics of complementarity in which human beings play a supportive role in perpetuating the integrity of the biosphere—the potentiality of human beings to be the most conscious products of natural evolution. Indeed, humans have an ethical responsibility to function creatively in the unfolding of that evolution. Social ecology thus stresses the need to embody its ethics of complementarity in palpable social institutions that will make human beings conscious ethical agents in promoting the well-being of themselves and the nonhuman world. It seeks the enrichment of the evolutionary process by the diversification of life-forms and the application of reason to a wondrous remaking of the planet along ecological lines. . . .

Social ecology, in effect, recognizes that—like it or not—the future of life on this planet pivots on the future of society. It contends that evolution, both in first nature and in second, is not yet complete. Nor are the two realms so separated from each other that we must choose one or the other—either natural evolution, with its “biocentric” halo, or social evolution, as we have known it up to now, with its “anthropocentric” halo—as the basis for a creative biosphere. We must go beyond both the natural and the social toward a new synthesis that contains the best of both. Such a synthesis must transcend both first and second nature in the form of a creative, self-conscious, and therefore “free nature,” in which human beings intervene in natural evolution with their best capacities—their ethical sense, their unequalled capacity for conceptual thought, and their remarkable powers and range of communication. . . .

No ethics or vision of an ecological society, however inspired, can be meaningful unless it is embodied in a living politics. By politics I do not mean the statecraft practiced by what we call politicians—namely, representatives elected or selected to manage public affairs and formulate policies as guidelines for social life. To social ecology, politics means what it meant in the democratic polis of classical Athens some two thousand years ago: direct

democracy, the formulation of policies by directly democratic popular assemblies, and the administration of those policies by mandated coordinators who can easily be recalled if they fail to abide by the decision of the assembly's citizens. I am very mindful that Athenian politics, even in its most democratic periods, was marred by the existence of slavery and patriarchy, and by the exclusion of the stranger from public life. In this respect, to be sure, it differed very little from most of the other ancient Mediterranean civilizations—and certainly ancient Asian ones—of the time. What made Athenian politics unique, however, was that it produced institutions that were extraordinarily democratic—even directly so—by comparison with the republican institutions of the so-called democracies of today's world. Either directly or indirectly, the Athenian democracy inspired later, more all-encompassing direct democracies, such as many medieval European towns, the little-known Parisian sections (or neighborhood assemblies) of 1793 that propelled the French Revolution in a highly radical direction, and more indirectly, New England town meetings and other, more recent attempts at civic self-governance.

Any self-managed community, however, that tries to live in isolation and develop self-sufficiency risks the danger of becoming parochial, even racist. Hence the need to extend the ecological politics of a direct democracy into confederations of ecocommunities, and to foster a healthy interdependence, rather than an introverted, stultifying independence. Social ecology would be obliged to embody its ethics in a politics of libertarian municipalism, in which municipalities conjointly gain rights to self-governance through networks of confederal councils, to which towns and cities would be expected to send their mandated, recallable delegates to adjust differences. All decisions would have to be ratified by a majority of the popular assemblies of the confederated towns and cities. This institutional process could be initiated in the neighborhoods of giant cities as well as in networks of small towns. . . .

Power will always belong to elite and commanding strata if it is not institutionalized in face-to-face democracies, among people who are fully empowered as social beings to make decisions in new communal assemblies. Attempts to empower people in this manner and form constitute an abiding challenge to the nation-state—that is, a dual power in which the free municipality exists in open tension with the nation-state. Power that does not belong to the people invariably belongs to the state and the exploitative interests it represents. Which is not to say that diversity is not a desideratum; to the contrary, it is the source of cultural creativity. Still it never should be celebrated in a nationalistic sense of apartness from the general interests of humanity as a whole, or else it will regress into the parochialism of folkdom and tribalism. . . .

A truly ecological society would open the vista of a “free nature” with a sophisticated eco-technology based on solar, wind, and water; carefully

treated fossil fuels would be sited to produce power to meet rationally conceived needs. Production would occur entirely for use, not for profit, and the distribution of goods would occur entirely to meet human needs based on norms established by citizens' assemblies and confederations of assemblies. Decisions by the community would be made according to direct, face-to-face procedures with all the coordinative judgments mandated to delegates. These judgments, in turn, would be referred back for discussion, approval, modification, or rejection by the assembly of assemblies (or commune of communes) as a whole, reflecting the wishes of the fully assembled majority.

We cannot tell how much technology will be expanded a few decades from now, let alone a few generations. Its growth and the prospects it is likely to open over the course of this century alone are too dazzling even for the most imaginative utopian to envision. If nothing else, we have been swept into a permanent technological and communications revolution whose culmination it is impossible to foresee. This amassing of power and knowledge opens two radically opposing prospects: either humanity will truly destroy itself and its habitat, or it will create a garden, a fruitful and benign world that not even the most fanciful utopian, Charles Fourier, could have imagined.

It is fitting that such dire alternatives should appear now and in such extreme forms. Unless social ecology—with its naturalistic outlook, its developmental interpretations of natural and social phenomena, its emphasis on discipline with freedom and responsibility with imagination—can be brought to the service of such historic ends, humanity may well prove to be incapable of changing the world. We cannot defer the need to deal with these prospects indefinitely: either a movement will arise that will bestir humanity into action or the last great chance in history for the complete emancipation of humanity will perish in unrestrained self-destruction.

NOTE

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8.2 Socialism and Ecology

JAMES O'CONNOR

The premise of red green political action is that there is a global ecological and economic crisis; that the ecological crisis cannot be resolved without a radical transformation of capitalist production relationships; and that the

economic crisis cannot be resolved without an equally radical transformation of capitalist productive forces. This means that solutions to the ecological crisis presuppose solutions to the economic crisis and vice versa. Another *a priori* of red green politics is that both sets of solutions presuppose an ecological socialism.

The problem is that socialism in theory and practice has been declared “dead on arrival.” In theory, post-Marxist theorists of radical democracy are completing what they think is the final autopsy of socialism. In practice, in the North, socialism has been banalized into a species of welfare capitalism. In Eastern Europe, the moment for democratic socialism seems to have been missed over twenty years ago and socialism is being overthrown. In the South, most socialist countries are introducing market incentives, reforming their tax structures, and taking other measures that they hope will enable them to find their niches in the world market. Everywhere market economy and liberal democratic ideas on the right, and radical democratic ideas on the Left, seem to be defeating socialism and socialist ideas.

Meanwhile, a powerful new force in world politics has appeared, an ecology or green movement that puts the earth first and takes the preservation of the ecological integrity of the planet as the primary issue.

The simultaneous rise of the free market and the greens together with the decline of socialism suggests that capitalism has an ally in its war against socialism. This turns out to be the case. Many or most greens dismiss socialism as irrelevant. Some or many greens attack it as dangerous. Especially are they quick to condemn those whom they accuse of trying to appropriate ecology for Marxism.¹ The famous green slogan, “neither left nor right, but out front,” speaks for itself.²

But most greens are not friends of capitalism, either, as the green slogan makes clear. The question then arises, who or what are the greens allied with? The crude answer is, the small farmers and independent business—i.e., those who used to be called the “peasantry” and “petty bourgeoisie”; “liveable cities” visionaries and planners; “small is beautiful” technocrats; and artisans, cooperatives, and others engaged in ecologically friendly production. In the South, greens typically support decentralized production organized within village communal politics; in the North, greens are identified with municipal and local politics of all types.

By way of contrast, mainstream environmentalists might be called “fictitious greens.”³ These environmentalists support environmental regulations consistent with profitability and the expansion of global capitalism, such as resource conservation for long-run profitability and profit-oriented regulation or abolition of pollution. They are typically allied with national and international interests. In the United States, they are environmental re-

formers, lobbyists, lawyers, and others associated with the famous Group of Ten.

As for ecology, everywhere it is at least tinged with populism, a politics of resentment against not only big corporations and the national state and central planning but also against environmentalism.

Ecology (in the present usage) is thus associated with *localism*, which has always been opposed to the centralizing powers of capitalism. If we put two and two together, we can conclude that ecology and localism in all of their rich varieties have combined to oppose both capitalism and socialism. Localism uses the medium or vehicle of ecology and vice versa. They are both the content and context of one another. Decentralism is an expression of a certain type of social relationship, a certain social relation of production historically associated with small-scale enterprise. Ecology is an expression of a certain type of relationship between human beings and nature—a relationship which stresses the integrity of local and regional eco-systems. Together ecology and localism constitute the most visible political and economic critique of capitalism (and state socialism) today.

Besides the fact that both ecology and localism oppose capital and the national state, there are two main reasons why they appear to be natural allies. First, ecology stresses the site specificity of the interchange between human material activity and nature, and hence opposes both the abstract valuation of nature made by capital and the idea of central planning of production, and centralist approaches to global issues generally.⁴ The concepts of site specificity of ecology, local subsistence or semi-autarkic economy, communal self-help principles, and direct forms of democracy all seem to be highly congruent.

Second, the socialist concept of the “masses” has been deconstructed and replaced by a new “politics of identity” in which cultural factors are given the place of honor. The idea of the specificity of cultural identities seems to meld easily with the site specificity of ecology in the context of a concept of social labor defined in narrow, geographic terms. The most dramatic examples today are the struggles of indigenous peoples to keep both their cultures and subsistence-type economies intact. In this case, the struggle to save local cultures and local eco-systems turns out to be two different sides of the same fight.

For their part, most of the traditional Left, as well as the unions, remain focused on enhanced productivity, growth, and international competitiveness—i.e., jobs and wages, or more wage labor—not to abolish exploitation but to be exploited less. This part of the Left does not want to be caught any more defending any policies which can be identified with “economic austerity” or policies which labor leaders and others think would endanger

past economic gains won by the working class (although union and worker struggles for healthy and safe conditions inside and outside of the workplace obviously connect in positive ways with broader ecological struggles). Most of those who oppose more growth and development are mainstream environmentalists from the urban middle classes who have the consumer goods that they want and also have the time and knowledge to oppose ecologically dangerous policies and practices. It would appear, therefore, that any effort to find a place for the working class in this equation—i.e., any attempt to marry socialism and ecology—is doomed from the start.

But just because something has never happened does not mean that it cannot happen.

Or, to put the point differently, there are good reasons to believe that world capitalism itself has created the conditions for an ecological socialist movement. These reasons can be collected under two general headings. The first pertains to the causes and effects of the world economic and ecological crisis from the mid-1970s to the present. The second pertains to the nature of the key ecological issues, most of which are national and international, as well as local, issues.

First, the vitality of Western capitalism since World War II has been based on the massive externalization of social and ecological costs of production. Since the slowdown of world economic growth in the mid-1970s, the concerns of both socialism and ecology have become more pressing than ever before in history. The accumulation of global capital through the modern crisis has produced even more devastating effects not only on wealth and income distribution, norms of social justice, and treatment of minorities but also on the environment. An “accelerated imbalance of (humanized) nature” is a phrase that neatly sums this up. Socially, the crisis has led to more wrenching poverty and violence, rising misery in all parts of the world, especially the South, and, environmentally, toxification of whole regions, the production of drought, the thinning of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, and the withering away of rain forests and wildlife. The issues of economic and social justice and ecological justice have surfaced as in no other period in history. It is increasingly clear that they are, in fact, two sides of the same historical process.

Given the relatively slow rate of growth of worldwide market demand since the mid-1970s, capitalist enterprises have been less able to defend or restore profits by expanding their markets and selling more commodities in booming markets. Instead, global capitalism has attempted to rescue itself from its deepening crisis by cutting costs, by raising the rate of exploitation of labor, and by depleting and exhausting resources. This “economic restructuring” is a two-sided process.

Cost cutting has led big and small capitals alike to externalize more social and environmental costs, or to pay less attention to the global environment, pollution, depletion of resources, worker health and safety, and product safety (meanwhile, increasing efficiency in energy and raw material use in the factories). The modern ecological crisis is aggravated and deepened as a result of the way that capitalism has reorganized itself to get through its latest economic crisis.

In addition, new and deeper inequalities in the distribution of wealth and income are the result of a worldwide increase in the rate of exploitation of labor. In the United States during the 1980s, for example, property income increased three times as fast as wage and salary income. Higher rates of exploitation have also depended on the ability to abuse undocumented workers and set back labor unions, social democratic parties, and struggles for social justice generally, especially in the South. It is no accident that in those parts of the world where ecological degradation is greatest—Central America, for example—there is greater poverty and heightened class struggles. The feminization of poverty is also a part of this trend of ecological destruction. It is the working class, oppressed minorities, women, and the rural and urban poor worldwide who suffer most from both economic and ecological exploitation. The burden of ecological destruction falls disproportionately on these groups.

Crisis-ridden and crisis-dependent capitalism has forced the traditional issues of socialism and the relatively new issues (“new” in terms of public awareness) of ecology to the top of the political agenda. Capitalism itself turns out to be a kind of marriage broker between socialism and ecology, or, to be more cautious, if there is not yet a prospect for marriage, there are at least openings for an engagement.

Second, the vast majority of economic and social and ecological problems worldwide cannot be adequately addressed at the local level. It is true that the degradation of local ecological systems often do have local solutions in terms of prevention and delinking (although less so in terms of social transformation). Hence it comes as no surprise to find strong connections between the revival of municipal and village politics and local ecological destruction. But most ecological problems, as well as the economic problems which are both cause and effect of the ecological problems, cannot be solved at the local level alone. Regional, national, and international planning are also necessary. The heart of ecology is, after all, the interdependence of specific sites and the need to situate local responses in regional, national, and international contexts—i.e., to sublimate the “local” and the “central” into new political forms.

National and international priorities are needed to deal with the problem of energy supplies, and supplies of nonrenewal resources in general, not

just for the present generation but especially for future generations. The availability of other natural resources, such as water, is mainly a regional issue, but in many parts of the globe it is a national or international issue. The same is true of the destruction of forests. Or take the problem of soil depletion, which seems to be local or site specific. Insofar as there are problems of soil quantity and quality, or water quantity or quality, in the big food-exporting countries, such as the United States, the food-importing countries are also affected. Further, industrial and agricultural pollution of all kinds spills over local, regional, and national boundaries. North Sea pollution, acid rain, ozone depletion, and global warming are obvious examples.

Furthermore, if we broaden the concept of ecology to include urban environments, or what [Karl] Marx called “general, communal conditions of production,”⁵ problems of urban transport and congestion, high rents and housing, and drugs, which appear to be local issues amenable to local solutions, turn out to be global issues pertaining to the way that money capital is allocated worldwide: the loss of foreign markets for raw materials and foodstuffs in drug-producing countries and the absence of regional, national, and international planning of infrastructures.

If we broaden the concept of ecology even more to include the relationship between human health and well-being and environmental factors (or what Marx called the “personal condition of production”), given the increased mobility of labor nationally and internationally, and greater emigration and immigration, partly thanks to the way capital has restructured itself to pull out of the economic crisis, we are also talking about problems with only or mainly national and international solutions.

Finally, if we address the question of technology and its transfer, and the relationship between new technologies and local, regional, and global ecologies, given that technology and its transfer are more or less monopolized by international corporations and nation-states, we have another national and international issue.

In sum, we have good reasons to believe that both the causes and the consequences of, and also the solutions to, most ecological problems are national and international and hence that far from being incompatible, socialism and ecology presuppose one another. Socialism needs ecology because the latter stresses site specificity and reciprocity, as well as the central importance of the material interchanges within nature and between society and nature. Ecology needs socialism because the latter stresses democratic planning and the key role of the social interchanges between human beings. By contrast, popular movements confined to the community, municipality, or village cannot by

themselves deal effectively with most of both the economic and ecological aspects of the general destructiveness of global capitalism, not to speak of the destructive dialectic between economic and ecological crisis.

If we assume that ecology and socialism presuppose one another, the logical question is why haven't they gotten together before now? Why is Marxism especially regarded as unfriendly to ecology and vice versa? To put the question another way, where did socialism go wrong, ecologically speaking?

Historical materialism is flawed in two big ways. Marx tended to abstract his discussions of social labor—i.e., the divisions of labor, from both culture and nature. A rich concept of social labor which includes both society's culture and nature's economy cannot be found in Marx or traditional historical materialism.

The first flaw is that the traditional conception of the productive forces ignores or plays down the fact that these forces are social in nature, and include the mode of cooperation, which is deeply inscribed by particular cultural norms and values.

The second flaw is that the traditional conception of the productive forces also plays down or ignores the fact that these forces are natural as well as social in character.

It is worth recalling that [Friedrich] Engels himself called Marxism the "materialist conception of history," where "history" is the noun and "materialist" is the modifier.⁶ Marxists know the expression "in material life social relations between people are produced and reproduced" by heart, and much less well the expression "in social life the material relations between people and nature are produced and reproduced." Marxists are very familiar with the "labor process" in which human beings are active agents, and much less familiar with the "waiting process" or "tending process" characteristic of agriculture, forestry, and other nature-based activities in which human beings are more passive partners and, more generally, where both parties are "active" in complex, interactive ways.

Marx constantly hammered away on the theme that the material activity of human beings is two-sided—i.e., a social relationship as well as a material relationship—in other words, that capitalist production produced and reproduced a specific mode of cooperation and exploitation and a particular class structure as well as the material basis of society. But in his determination to show that material life is also social life, Marx tended to neglect the opposite and equally important fact that social life is also material life. To put the same point differently, in the formulation "material life determines consciousness," Marx stressed that since material life is socially organized, the social relationships of production determine consciousness. He played

down the equally true fact that since material life is also the interchange between human beings and nature, these material or natural relationships also determine consciousness. These points have been made in weak and strong ways by a number of people, although they have never been integrated and developed into a revised version of the materialist conception of history.

It has also been suggested *why* Marx played up history (albeit to the exclusion of culture) and played down nature. The reason is that the problem facing Marx in his time was to show that capitalist property relationships were historical, not natural. But so intent was Marx to criticize those who naturalized and hence reified capitalist production relationships, competition, the world market, etc., that he forgot or downplayed the fact that the development of human-made forms of “second nature” does not make nature any less natural. This was the price he paid for inverting [Ludwig] Feuerbach’s passive materialism and [G.W.F.] Hegel’s active idealism into his own brand of active materialism. As Kate Soper has written, “the fact is that in its zeal to escape the charge of biological reductionism, Marxism has tended to fall prey to an antiethical form of reductionism, which in arguing the dominance of social over natural factors literally spirits the biological out of existence altogether.”⁷ Soper then calls for a “social biology.” We can equally call for a “social chemistry,” “social hydrology,” and so on, that is, a “social ecology,” which for socialists means “socialist ecology.”

The greens are forcing the reds to pay close attention to the material interchanges between people and nature and to the general issue of biological exploitation, including the biological exploitation of labor, and also to adopt an ecological sensibility. Some reds have been trying to teach the greens to pay closer attention to capitalist production relationships, competition, the world market, etc.—to sensitize the greens to the exploitation of labor and the themes of economic crisis and social labor. And feminists have been teaching both greens and reds to pay attention to the sphere of reproduction and women’s labor.

To sublimate socialism and ecology does not mean in the first instance defining a new category which contains elements of both socialism and ecology but which is in fact neither. What needs to be sublated politically is localism (or decentralism) and centralism—i.e., self-determination and the overall planning, coordination, and control of production. To circle back to the main theme, localism per se won’t work politically and centralism has self-destructed. To abolish the state will not work; to rely on the liberal democratic state in which “democracy” has merely a procedural or formal meaning will not work, either. The only political form that might work, that might be eminently suited to both ecological problems of site specificity and

global issues, is a democratic state—a state in which the administration of the division of social labor is democratically organized.⁸

Finally, the only *ecological* form that might work is a sublation of two kinds of ecology, the “social biology” of the coastal plain, the plateau, the local hydrological cycle, etc., and the energy economics, the regional and international “social climatology,” etc., of the globe—that is, in general, the sublation of nature’s economy defined in local, regional, and international terms. To put the conclusion somewhat differently, we need “socialism” *at least* to make the social relations of production transparent, to end the rule of the market and commodity fetishism, and to end the exploitation of human beings by other human beings; we need “ecology” *at least* to make the social productive forces transparent, to end the degradation and destruction of the earth.

NOTES

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1. This is a crude simplification of green thought and politics, which vary from country to country and which are also undergoing internal changes. In the United States, for example, where Marxism has been relatively historically to ecology, “left green” is associated with anarchism or libertarian socialism.

2. This slogan was coined by a conservative cofounder of the German Greens and was popularized in the United States by antisocialist “New Age” greens Fritjof Capra and Charlene Spretnak. Needless to say, it was never accepted by left greens of any variety.

3. “Mainstream environmentalists” is used to identify those who are trying to save capitalism from its ecologically self-destructive tendencies. Many individuals who call themselves “environmentalists” are alienated by, and hostile to, global capitalism, and also do not necessarily identify with the “local” (see the following text).

4. Editors’ note: For more on this topic, see, for example, Martin O’Connor, *Is Capitalism Sustainable? Political Economy and the Politics of Ecology* (New York: Guilford Press, 1994).

5. Karl Marx, *Capital* (London: Penguin Books, 1974), 3:373.

6. Friedrich Engels, review of Karl Marx’s *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (August 1859), in *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Collected Works* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), 16:469.

7. Quoted by Ken Post, “In Defense of Materialistic History,” *Socialism in the World*, no. 74–75 (1989): 67.

8. I realize that the idea of a “democratic state” seems to be a contradiction in terms, or at least immediately raises difficult questions about the desirability of the separation of powers; the problem of scale inherent in any coherent description of substantive democracy; and the question of how to organize much less plan a nationally and internationally regulated division of social labor without a universal equivalent for measuring costs and productivity, however “costs” and “productivity” are defined (courtesy of John Ely).

8.3 Why Primitivism?

JOHN ZERZAN

Debord biographer Anselm Jappe referred to the puzzle of the present, “where the results of human activity are so antagonistic to humanity itself,”¹ recalling a question posed nearly fifty years ago by Joseph Wood Krutch: “What has become of that opportunity to become more fully human that the ‘control of nature’ was to provide?”²

The general crisis is rapidly deepening in every sphere of life. On the biospheric level, this reality is so well known that it could be termed banal, if it weren’t so horrifying: increasing rates of species extinctions, proliferating dead zones in the world’s oceans, ozone holes, disappearing rain forests, global warming, the pervasive poisoning of air, water, and soil, to name a few realities.

A grisly link to the social world is widespread pharmaceutical contamination of watersheds.³ In this case, destruction of the natural world is driven by massive alienation, masked by drugs. In the United States, life-threatening obesity is sharply rising, and tens of millions suffer from serious depression and/or anxiety.⁴ There are frequent eruptions of multiple homicides in homes, schools, and workplaces, while the suicide rate among young people has tripled in recent decades.⁵ Fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, and other “mystery”/psychosomatic illnesses have multiplied, vying with the emergence of new diseases with known physiological origins: Ebola, Lassa fever, AIDS, Legionnaires’ disease. The illusion of technological mastery is mocked by the antibiotic-resistant return of tuberculosis and malaria, not to mention outbreaks of *E. coli*, mad cow disease, West Nile virus, and so on. Even a cursory survey of contemporary psychic immiseration would require many pages. Barely suppressed anger, a sense of emptiness, corrosion of belief in institutions across the board, and high stress levels all contribute to what Claude Karnoouh has called “the growing fracture of the social bond.”⁶

Today’s reality keeps underlining the inadequacy of current theory and its overall retreat from any redemptive project. It seems undeniable that’s what’s left of life on earth is being taken from us. Where is the depth of analysis and vision to match the extremity of the human condition and the fragility of our planet’s future? Are we simply left with a totalizing current of degradation and loss?

The crisis is diffuse, but at the same time it is starkly visible on every level. One comes to agree with Ulrich Beck that “people have begun to question modernity . . . its premises have begun to wobble. Many people are deeply upset over the house-of-cards character of superindustrialism.”⁷ Agnes

Heller observed that our condition becomes less stable and more chaos-prone the further we move away from nature, contrary to the dominant ideology of progress and development.⁸ With disenchantment comes a growing sense that something different is urgently needed.

The challenge to theory or analysis resides at a depth that theorists have almost entirely avoided. To go beyond the prospectless malaise, the collapse of social confidence so devastatingly expressed in *Les particules élémentaires* (Michel Houellebecq's end-of-the-millennium novel),⁹ the analytical perspective simply must shift in a basic way. This consists, for openers, in refusing [Michel] Foucault's conclusion that human capacities and relations are inescapably technologized.¹⁰

As Eric Vogelin put it, "The death of the spirit is the price of progress."¹¹ But if the progress of nihilism is identical to the nihilism of progress, whence comes the rupture, the caesura? How to pose a radical break from the totality of progress, technology, modernity?

A quick scan of recent academic fads shows precisely where such a perspective has not been found. Frederic Jameson's apt formulation introduces the subject for us: "Postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good."¹²

Postmodernism is the mirror of an ethos of defeat and reaction, a failure of will and intellect that has accommodated to new extremities of estrangement and destructiveness.¹³ For the postmodernists, almost nothing can be opposed. Reality, after all, is so messy, shifting, complex, indeterminate; and oppositions are, of course, just so many false binarisms. Vacuous jargon and endless sidestepping transcend passé dualisms. Daniel White, for example, prescribed "a postmodern-ecological rubric that steps past the traditional either-or of the Oppressor and Oppressed."¹⁴

In the consumerist realm of freedom, "this complex node, where technologies are diffused, where technologies are chosen," according to Mike Michael,¹⁵ who can say if anything is at all amiss? Iain Chambers is an eloquent voice of postmodern abjectness, wondering whether alienation is not simply an eternal given: "What if alienation is a terrestrial constraint destined to frustrate the 'progress' introjected in all teleologies? . . . Perhaps there is no separate, autonomous alternative to the capitalist structuring of the present-day world. Modernity, the westernization of the world, globalisation, are the labels of an economic, political and cultural order that is seemingly installed for the foreseeable future."¹⁶

The fixation on surface (depth is an illusion; so are presence and immediacy), the ban on unifying narratives and inquiry into origins, indifference to method and evidence, and emphasis on effects and novelty all find their expression in postmodern culture at large. These attitudes and practices spread

everywhere, along with the technology they embrace without reservation. At the same time, though, there are signs that these trivializing and derivative recipes for “thought” may be losing their appeal.¹⁷ An antidote to postmodern surrender has been made available, largely through what is known as the antiglobalization movement.

Jean-François Lyotard, who once thought that technologized existence offered options, began to write about the sinister development of a neo-totalitarian, instrumentalist imprisonment. In earlier essays he had pointed to a loss of affect as part of the postmodern condition. More recently he attributed that loss to techno-scientific hegemony. Crippled individuals are only part of the picture, as Lyotard portrays social effects of what can only be called instrumental reason, in pathological ascendance. And contra Jürgen Habermas, this domination by instrumental reason is in no way challenged by “communicative action.”¹⁸ Referring to global urban development, Lyotard stated, “We inhabit the megalopolis only to the extent that we declare it uninhabitable. Otherwise, we are just lodged there.” Also, “with the megalopolis, what is called the West realizes and diffuses its nihilism. It is called development.”¹⁹

In other words, there may be a way out of the postmodern cul-de-sac, at least for some. Those still contained by the Left have a much different legacy of failure to jettison—one that obviously transcends the “merely” cultural. Discredited and dying as an actual alternative, this perspective surely also needs to go.

[Michael] Hardt and [Antonio] Negri’s *Empire*²⁰ will serve as a classic artifact of leftism, a compendium of the worn out and left over. These self-described communist militants have no notion whatsoever of the enveloping crisis. Thus they continue to seek “alternatives within modernity.” They locate the force behind their communist revolution in “the new productive practices and the concentration of productive labor on the plastic and fluid terrain of the new communicative, biological, and mechanical technologies.”²¹ The leftist analysis valiantly upholds the heart of productionist Marxism, in the face of ever-advancing, standardizing, destructive technique. Small wonder Hardt and Negri fail to consider the pulverization of indigenous cultures and the natural world, or the steady worldwide movement toward complete dehumanization.

Claude Karnoouh considers monstrous “the idea that progress consists in the total control of the genetic stock of all living beings.” For him, this would amount to an unfreedom “that even the bloodiest totalitarianism of the 20th century was not able to accomplish.”²² Hardt and Negri would not shrink from such control, since they do not question any of its premises, dynamics, or preconditions.

It is no small irony that the militants of *Empire* stand exposed for the incomprehension of the trajectory of modernity by one of their opposite number, Oswald Spengler. As nationalist and reactionary that Spengler was, *The Decline of the West* is the great masterwork of world history, and his grasp of Western civilization's inner logic is uncanny in its prescience.

Especially relevant here are Spengler's judgments, so many decades ago, concerning technological development and its social, cultural, and environmental impacts. He saw that the dynamic, promethean ("Faustian") nature of global civilization becomes fully realized as self-destructive mass society and equally calamitous modern technology. The subjugation of nature leads ineluctably to its destruction, and to the destruction of civilization. "An artificial world is permeating and poisoning the natural. The Civilization itself has become a machine that does, or tries to do everything in mechanical terms."²³ Civilized man is a "petty creator against Nature." "This revolutionary in the world of life . . . has become the slave of his creature. The Culture, the aggregate of artificial, personal, self-made life-forms, develops into a close-barred cage."²⁴

Whereas Marx viewed industrial civilization as both reason incarnate and a permanent achievement, Spengler saw it as ultimately incompatible with its physical environment, and therefore suicidally transitory. "Higher Man is a tragedy. With his graves he leaves behind the earth a battlefield and a wasteland. He has drawn plant and animal, the sea and mountain into his decline. He has painted the face of the world with blood, deformed and mutilated it."²⁵ Spengler understood that "the history of this technics is fast drawing to its inevitable close."²⁶

Theodor Adorno seemed to concur with elements of Spengler's thinking: "What can oppose the decline of the west is not a resurrected culture but the utopia that is silently contained in the image of its decline."²⁷ Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*²⁸ has a critique of civilization at its core, with its focal image of Odysseus forcibly repressing the Sirens' song of eros. *Dialectic's* central thesis is that "the history of civilization is . . . the history of renunciation."²⁹ As Albrecht Wellmer summed it up, "*Dialectic of Enlightenment* is the theory of an irredeemably darkened modernity."³⁰ This perspective, now continually augmented by confirming data, tends to render irrelevant both sources of theory and the logic of progress. If there is no escape from a condition we can understand all too well, what more is there to say?

Herbert Marcuse tried to lay out an escape route in *Eros and Civilization*³¹ by attempting to uncouple civilization from modernity. To preserve the "gains" of modernity, the solution is a "non-repressive" civilization. Marcuse would dispense with "surplus repression," implying that repression itself

is indispensable. Since modernity depends on production, itself a repressive institution, redefining work as free play can salvage both modernity and civilization. I find this an implausible, even desperate defense of civilization. Marcuse fails to refute Freud's view that civilization cannot be reformed.

Sigmund Freud argued in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that non-repressive civilization is impossible, because the foundation of civilization is a forcible ban on instinctual freedom and eros. To introduce work and culture, the ban must be permanently imposed. Since this repression and its constant maintenance are essential to civilization, universal civilization brings universal neurosis.³² Émile Durkheim had already noted that as humankind "advances" with civilization and the division of labor, "the general happiness of society is decreasing."³³

As a good bourgeois, Freud justified civilization on the grounds that work and culture are necessary and that civilization enables humans to survive on a hostile planet. "The principal task of civilization, its actual *raison d'être*, is to defend us against nature." And further, "But how ungrateful, how short-sighted after all to strive for the abolition of civilization! What would then remain would be a state of nature, and that would be far harder to bear."³⁴

Possibly civilization's most fundamental ideological underpinning is Thomas Hobbes's characterization of the precivilized state of nature as "nasty, brutish, and short."³⁵ Freud subscribed to this view, of course, as did Adorno and Horkheimer.

Since the mid-1960s there has been a paradigm shift in how anthropologists understand prehistory, with profound implications for theory. Based on a solid body of archaeological and ethnographic research, mainstream anthropology has abandoned the Hobbesian hypothesis. Life before or outside civilization is now defined more specifically as social existence prior to domestication of animals and plants. Mounting evidence demonstrates that before the Neolithic shift from a foraging or gatherer-hunter mode of existence to an agricultural lifeway, most people had ample free time, considerable gender autonomy or equality, an ethos of egalitarianism and sharing, and no organized violence.

A (misleadingly named) "Man the Hunter" conference at the University of Chicago in 1966 launched the reversal of the Hobbesian view, which for centuries had provided ready justification for all the repressive institutions of a complex, imperializing Western culture. Supporting evidence for the new paradigm has come forth from archaeologists and anthropologists such as Marshall Sahlins, Richard B. Lee, Adrienne Zihlman, and many others;³⁶ these studies are widely available and now form the theoretical basis for everything from undergraduate courses to field research.

Archaeologists continue to uncover examples of how our Paleolithic forebears led mainly peaceful, egalitarian, and healthy lives for about two million years. The use of fire to cook tuberous vegetables as early as 1.9 million years ago and long-distance sea travel 800,000 years ago are two findings among many that testify to an intelligence equal to our own.³⁷

Genetic engineering and imminent human cloning are just the most current manifestations of a dynamic of control and domination of nature that humans set in motion ten thousand years ago, when our ancestors began to domesticate animals and plants. In the four hundred generations of human existence since then, all of natural life has been penetrated and colonized at the deepest levels, paralleling the controls that have been ever more thoroughly engineered at the social level. Now we can see this trajectory for what it really is: a transformation that inevitably brought all-enveloping destruction that was in no way necessary. Significantly, the worldwide archaeological record demonstrates that many human groups tried agriculture and/or pastoralism and later gave them up, falling back on more reliable foraging and hunting strategies. Others refused for generations to adopt the domestication practices of close neighbors.

It is here that a primitivist alternative has begun to emerge, in theory and in practice.³⁸ To the question of technology must be added that of civilization itself. Ever-growing documentation of human prehistory as a very long period of largely non-alienated human life stands in stark contrast to the increasingly stark failures of untenable modernity.

In the context of his discussion of the limitations of Habermas, Joel Whitebook wrote, "It may be that the scope and depth of the social and ecological crisis are so great that nothing short of an epochal transformation on the scale of world views will be commensurate with them."³⁹ Since that time, Cornelius Castoriadis concluded that a radical transformation will "have to launch an attack on the division of labor in its hitherto known forms."⁴⁰ Division of labor, slowly emerging through prehistory, was the foundation of domestication and continues to drive the technological imperative forward.

The challenge is to disprove George Grant's thesis that we live in "a world where only catastrophe can slow the unfolding of the potentialities of technique"⁴¹ and to actualize Claude Karnoouh's judgment that revolution can only be redefined against progress.⁴²

NOTES

1. Anselm Jappe, *Guy Debord* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 3.
2. Joseph Wood Krutch, *Human Nature and the Human Condition* (New York: Random House, 1959), 192.
3. J. Raloff, "More Waters Test Positive for Drugs," *Science News*, September 24, 2002, available at <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/more-waters-test-positive-drugs>.

4. The dramatic upsurge in health-threatening obesity has occasioned many articles, but exact figures are elusive at this time. A reported 27 percent of adult Americans have depression or anxiety disorders. See G. S. Malhi, G. B. Parker, G. Gladstone, K. Wilhelm, and P. B. Mitchell, "Recognizing the Anxious Face of Depression," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases* 190, no. 6 (2002): 366–373.

5. S. K. Goldsmith, T. C. Pellner, A. M. Kleinman, and W. E. Bunney, eds., *Reducing Suicide: A National Imperative* (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2002).

6. Claude Karnoouh, "On Interculturalism and Multiculturalism," *TELOS* 110 (Winter 1998): 133.

7. Ulrich Beck, *Ecological Enlightenment: Essays on the Politics of the Risk Society* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1995), 37.

8. Agnes Heller, *Can Modernity Survive?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 60.

9. Michel Houellebecq, *Les particules élémentaires* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998). More pro-saically, Zygmunt Bauman, in *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000), and Pierre Bordieu, in *Contre-feux: Propos pour servir à la résistance contre l'invasion néo-libérale* (Paris: Editions Liber, 1998), especially 97, characterize modern society along these lines.

10. Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 47–48.

11. Eric Vogelín, *The Collected Works of Eric Vogelín*, vol. 5, *Modernity without Restraint* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 105.

12. Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), ix.

13. John Zerzan, "The Catastrophe of Postmodernism," in *Future Primitive: Revisited* (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2012), 64–91.

14. Daniel R. White, *Postmodern Ecology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 198. Bordieu referred to "the futility of the strident calls of 'postmodern' philosophers for the 'suppression of dualism.' These dualisms deeply rooted in things (structures) and in bodies, do not spring from a simple effect of verbal naming and cannot be abolished by an act of performative magic." Pierre Bordieu, *Masculine Domination* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 103.

15. Mike Michael, *Reconnecting Culture, Technology and Nature* (London: Routledge, 2000), 8. The title itself is testimony to the surrender to domination.

16. Iain Chambers, *Culture after Humanism* (London: Routledge, 2002), 122, 41.

17. Recent titles in various fields indicate a shift. For example, see Martin Beck Matustic and William L. McBride, eds., *Calvin O. Schrag and the Task of Philosophy after Postmodernity* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002); and Carmel Flaskas, *Family Therapy beyond Postmodernism* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002). Tilottama Rajan and Michael J. Driscoll, eds., *After Poststructuralism: Writing the Intellectual History of Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), is haunted by themes of origins and the primitive.

18. Jean-François Lyotard, "Domus and the Megalopolis," in *The Inhuman: Reflections of Time* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 200. The chapter could very legitimately have been called, in anti-postmodernist fashion, "From Domus to the Megalopolis."

19. Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, 200; Jean-François Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 23.

20. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

21. *Ibid.*, 218.

22. Claude Karnoouh, "Heidegger on History and Politics as Events," *TELOS* 120 (Summer 2001): 126.
23. Oswald Spengler, *Man and Technics: A Contribution to a Philosophy of Life* (New York: Knopf, 1932), 94.
24. *Ibid.*, 69.
25. Quoted in John Farrenkopf, *Prophet of Decline* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 224.
26. Spengler, *Man and Technics*, 103.
27. Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967), 72.
28. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).
29. *Ibid.*, 43.
30. Albrecht Wellmer, *Endgames: The Irreconcilable Nature of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 255.
31. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).
32. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 1961).
33. Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 249.
34. Sigmund Freud, "The Future of an Illusion," in *The Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 21, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 15.
35. *Leviathan*, chap. 13.
36. Important texts include Eleanor Leacock and Richard B. Lee, *Politics and History in Band Societies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Richard B. Lee and Richard Daly, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago: Aldine Atherton, 1972); Colin Turnbull, *The Forest People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968); and Mary Ellen Morbeck, Alison Galloway, and Adrienne L. Zihlman, eds., *The Evolving Female* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
37. See, for example, M. J. Morwood, P. B. O'Sullivan, F. Aziz, and A. Raza, "Fission-Track Ages of Stone Tools and Fossils on the East Indonesian Island of Flores," *Nature*, March 12, 1998, pp. 173–176.
38. This tendency within an increasingly anarchist-oriented antiglobalization movement is in the ascendant in the United States. Among a growing number of periodicals are *Anarchy*, *Disorderly Conduct*, *The Final Days*, *Green Anarchy*, *Green Journal*, and *Species Traitor*. Texts include Chellis Glendinning, *My Name Is Chellis and I'm in Recovery from Western Civilization* (Boston: Shambhala, 1994); Derrick Jensen, *Culture of Make Believe* (New York: Context Books, 2002); Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael* (New York: Bantam, 1995); and John Zerzan, *Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilization* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2002).
39. Joel Whitebook, "The Problem of Nature in Habermas," *TELOS* 40 (Summer 1979): 69.
40. Cornelius Castoriadis, *Crossroads in the Labyrinth* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), 257. Also see Keekok Lee, "To De-Industrialize—Is It So Irrational?" in *The Politics of Nature*, ed. Andrew Dobson and Paul Lucardie (London: Routledge, 1993), 105–117.
41. George Grant, *Technology and Empire* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1969), 142. Of course, the situation grows more and more grave, with sudden, dire changes very possible. See Marten Scheffer, Steve Carpenter, Jonathan A. Foley, Carl Folke, and Brian Walker, "Catastrophic Shifts in Ecosystems," *Nature*, October 11, 2001, pp. 591–596; and

M. Manion and W. M. Evan, on the growing likelihood of disasters, in “Technological Catastrophes: Their Causes and Preventions,” *Technology in Society* 24 (2002): 207–224.

42. Claude Karnoouh, “Technique et Destin,” *Krisis* 34 (Fall 2000): 37–64.

8.4 In Catastrophic Times

Resisting the Coming Barbarism

ISABELLE STENGERS

It is not a question here of demonstrating that the decades to come will be crucial or of describing what could happen. What I am attempting instead is of the order of an intervention, something that we experience during a debate when a participant speaks and presents the situation a little differently, creating a short freezing of time. Subsequently, of course, the debate starts again as if nothing had happened, but some among those who were listening will later make it known that they were touched. That is what happened during a debate on Belgian television about global warming, when I suggested that we were “exceptionally ill-equipped to deal with what is in the process of happening.” The discovery that such a remark could function as an intervention is the point of departure of this essay.

Intervening demands brevity, because it is not a question of convincing but rather of passing “to whom it may concern” what makes you think, feel, imagine. But it is also a fairly demanding test, a trajectory in which it is easy to slip up, and so it is important not to try it alone.

BETWEEN TWO HISTORIES

We live in strange times, a little as if we were suspended between two histories, both of which speak of a world become “global.” One of them is familiar to us. It has the rhythm of news from the front in the great worldwide competition and has economic growth for its arrow of time. It has the clarity of evidence with regard to what it requires and promotes, but it is marked by a remarkable confusion as to its consequences. The other, by contrast, could be called distinct with regard to what is in the process of happening, but it is obscure with regard to what it requires, the response to give to what is in the process of happening.

Clarity does not signify tranquility. At the moment when I began to write this text, the *subprime* crisis was already shaking the banking world and we were learning about the nonnegligible role played by financial speculation in the brutal price increases of basic foodstuffs. At the moment when I was putting the final touches to this text (mid-October 2008), the financial

meltdown was under way, panic on the stock markets had been unleashed, and nation-states, which to that point had been kept out of the court of the powerful, were suddenly called on to try to reestablish order and to save the banks. I do not know what the situation will be when this book reaches its readers. What I do know is that, to the extent that the crisis amplified, more and more numerous voices could be heard, explaining with great clarity its mechanisms, the fundamental instability of the arrangements of finance, the intrinsic danger of what investors had put their trust in. Sure, the explanation comes afterward, and it doesn't allow for prediction. But for the moment, all are unanimous: it will be necessary to regulate, to monitor, indeed to outlaw, certain financial products! The era of financial capitalism, this predator freed from every constraint by the ultra-liberalism of the Thatcher-Reagan years, would supposedly have come to an end; the banks will have to learn their "real business" again, that of servicing industrial capitalism.

Perhaps an era has come to an end, but only as an episode belonging as such to what I have called the first clear and confused "history." I don't believe that I am kidding myself in thinking that if the calm has returned when this book reaches its readers, the primordial challenge will be to relaunch economic growth. Tomorrow, like yesterday, we will be called on to accept the sacrifices required by the mobilization of everyone for this growth and to recognize the imperious necessity of reforms "because the world has changed." The message addressed to all will thus remain unchanged: We have no choice, we must grit our teeth, accept that times are hard, and mobilize for the economic growth outside of which there is no conceivable solution. If we do not do so, others will take advantage of our lack of courage and confidence.

In other words, it may be that the relations between protagonists will have been modified, but it will always be the same clear and confused history. The order-words are clear, but the perspectives on the link between these order-words that mobilize and the solution to the problems that are accumulating—growing social inequality, pollution, poisoning by pesticides, exhaustion of raw materials, ground water depletion, and so on—couldn't be more confused.

That is why *In Catastrophic Times*, written for the most part before the catastrophic financial collapse, has not had to be rewritten. Its point of departure is different. It is due to a fact: that to call into question the capacity of what today is called development to respond to the problems that I have cited is henceforth to push at an open door. The idea that it would belong to this type of development, which has growth as its motor, to repair what it has itself contributed to creating, is not dead, but it has lost all obviousness. The intrinsically "unsustainable" character of this development, that some

had announced decades ago, has henceforth become common knowledge. And it is precisely this knowledge become common that creates the distinct sense that another history has begun. What we know now is that if we grit our teeth and continue to have confidence in economic growth, we are going, as one says, straight to the wall.

This doesn't signify in the slightest a rupture between the two histories. What they have in common is the necessity of resisting what is leading us straight to the wall. In particular, nothing of what I will write in what follows should make us forget the indispensable character of big, popular mobilizations, let us think of Seattle, which are peerless for awakening the capacities to resist and to put pressure on those who demand our confidence.

As in the financial crash, which gave the proof that the financial world was vulnerable in its entirety, it is the "facts" that have spoken, not ideas that have triumphed. Over the last few years one has had to cede to the evidence: what was lived as a rather abstract possibility, the global climatic disorder has well and truly begun. This (appropriately named) "inconvenient truth" has henceforth imposed itself. The controversy among scientists is over, which doesn't signify that the detractors have disappeared but that one is only interested in them as special cases, to be interpreted by their acquaintance with the oil lobby or for their psychosocial particularities (in France, for example, that of being a member of the Academy of Science), which makes them fractious with regard to what disturbs.

One knows that new messages are already reaching the unfortunate consumer, who was supposed to have confidence in economic growth but who is now equally invited to measure his or her ecological footprint, that is to say, to recognize the irresponsible and selfish character of his or her mode of consumption. One hears it asserted that it will be necessary to change our way of life. There is an appeal to goodwill at all levels, but the disarray of politicians is almost palpable. How is one to maintain at the same time the imperative of "freeing economic growth," of "winning" in the grand economic competition, and the challenge of having to think a future that defines this type of growth as irresponsible, even criminal?

Despite this disarray, it is always the very clear logic of what I have called the first history that prevails and continues to accumulate victims: the recent victims of the financial crisis, certainly, but also, and above all, the "ordinary" victims, sacrificed on the altar of growth to the service of which our lives are dedicated. Among these victims, there are those who are distant but there are others who are closer. One thinks of those who have drowned in the Mediterranean, who preferred a probable death to the life that they would lead in their country left "behind in the race for growth," and of those who, having arrived among us, are pursued as "sans-papier." But it

isn't only a matter of "others." "Mobilization for growth" hits "our" workers, submitted to intolerable imperatives of productivity, like the unemployed, targeted by policies of activation and motivation, called on to prove that they are spending their time looking for work, even forced to accept no matter what "job." In my country, the hunting season against the unemployed has been declared open. Public enemy number one is the "cheat," who has succeeded in fabricating a life in the interstices. That this life might be active, producing joy, cooperation, solidarity, matters very little, or must even be denounced. The unemployed person who is neither ashamed nor desperate must seek to pass unnoticed because he or she sets a bad example, that of demobilization, desertion. Economic war, this war whose victims have no right to be honored but are called on to find every means of returning to the front, requires all of us.

One should not expect from this book an answer to the question "What is to be done?" because this expectation will be deceived. My trade is words, and words have a power. They can imprison in doctrinal squabbles or aim at the power of order-words—that is why I fear the word *degrowth* with its threatening arithmetic rationality—but they can also make one think, produce new connections, shake up habits. That is why I honor the invention of the name "Objectors to Growth"/"Economic Objectors."¹ Words don't have the power to answer the question of multiple and entangled threats of what I have called the "second history," on which we are embarked despite ourselves. But they can—and that is what this book attempts—contribute to formulating this question in a mode that forces us to think what the possibility of a future that is not barbaric requires.

THE EPOCH HAS CHANGED

For example, they will say to us, let's stop dreaming that political measures can respond to lightning increase of inequality. Faced with pauperization, one will have to content oneself with measures that are more of the order of public or even private charity. Because it cannot be a question of going back on the evidence that has succeeded in imposing itself in the course of the last thirty years: one cannot interfere with the "laws of the market" or with the profits of industry. It is thus a matter of learning to adapt, with the sad sigh that kills politics as much as democracy: "Sorry, but we have to."

The grand theme of progress has already stopped being convincing. Thus the demonstrations that capitalism gives us an illusion of freedom, that the choices that it allows us are only forced choices, have become quasi-redundant. One has henceforth to "believe in the market" to continue to adhere to the fable of the freedom given to each to choose his or her life. It is

a matter then of thinking at a moment when the role—that was previously judged crucial—of illusions and false beliefs has lost its importance, without the power of the “false choices” that are offered to us having been undermined—quite the contrary.

As for states, we know that with a great outburst of enthusiastic resignation, they have given up all of the means that would have allowed them to grasp their responsibilities and have given the globalized free market the control of the future of the planet. Even if—it is henceforth the order of the day—they claim having understood the need to “regulate” it, so as to avoid “excesses.”

I have called the first history that of a generalized competition, of a war of all against all, wherein everyone, individual, enterprise, nation, region of the world, has to accept the sacrifices necessary to have the right to survive (to the detriment of their competitors), and obeys the only system “proven to work.” Of all the claims to proof that we have been given to meet, that is the most obscene and the most imbecilic. And yet it keeps coming back, again and again, like a refrain, and it asks us to pretend to believe that things will end up sorting themselves out, that our own task is limited to insulating our houses, changing our lightbulbs, but also continuing to buy cars because growth has to be supported.

CAPITALISM

What Marx named “capitalism” doesn’t speak to us about humans; it doesn’t translate their greed, their self-interest, their inability to pose questions about the future.

In their own way this is what is recognized by the servile or illuminated economists who talk about the “laws of the market” that impose themselves whatever our projects and futile hopes might be. Capitalism does, in effect, have something transcendent about it, but not in the sense of “laws of nature.” Nor in the sense that I have associated with Gaia either, which is most certainly implacable, but in a mode that I would call properly materialist, translating the untamable character of assemblages that couple together those material processes on whose stability that which has been called “development” thought it could count. Capitalism’s mode of transcendence *is not implacable, just radically irresponsible*, incapable of answering for anything. And it has nothing to do with the “materialism” with which people of faith often associate it. In contrast to Gaia, one ought to associate it instead with a power of a (maleficent) “spiritual” type,² a power that captures, segments, and redefines always more and more dimensions of what makes up our reality, our lives, our practices, in its service.

NOT PAYING ATTENTION!

[For] “development” or “growth,” the injunction is above all to not pay attention. Growth is a matter of what presides over everything else, including—we are ordered to think—the possibility of compensating for all the damage that is its price. In other words, while we have more and more means for foreseeing and measuring this damage, the same blindness that we attribute to civilizations in the past (who destroyed the environment on which they depended) is demanded of us. They may not have understood what they were doing, and they did it only locally. We know that we are destroying to the point of scarcity resources constituted over the course of millions of years of terrestrial history (much longer for aquifers).

ENCLOSURES

Enclosures makes reference to a decisive moment in the social and economic history of England: the final eradication in the eighteenth century of customary rights that bore on the use of communal land, the “commons.” These lands were “enclosed”—that is to say, appropriated in an exclusive manner by their legal owners—and that with tragic consequences, because use of the commons was essential to the life of peasant communities. A frightening number of people were stripped of all means of subsistence. “The Tragedy of the Commons” is, moreover, the title of a widely read essay that was published in 1968, but its author, Garrett Hardin, misappropriates the association between the destruction of the commons and tragedy. The tragedy is in fact supposed to be the overexploitation (postulated by Harding) of the communal lands themselves, linked to the fact that each user pursued his self-interest without taking into account the fact that the outcome of this self-interest would be the impoverishment of everyone. This fable evidently met with great success, as it allowed not only the enclosures to be legitimated as “unfortunately necessary” but with them the ensemble of privatizations of what had been of the order of collective management: the interest of private property owners is also selfish but it pushes them to turn a profit on their capital, to improve their returns, the increase productivity.

Another classic narrative—that of [Karl] Marx—associates the expropriation of the commons with what he calls the “primitive accumulation” of capital.³ The great mass of the poor, now stripped of any attachment, will be mercilessly exploited by the nascent industries, because there is no need to take into account the reproduction of labor power: the poor can collapse on the job as there will always be others. In this sense, the enclosures prepare the capitalist appropriation of the labor of those who, deprived of their means of

life, will be reduced to being nothing but their labor power. However, Marx did not celebrate this expropriation in the manner in which he celebrates the destruction of the guilds and of the ensemble of what attaches humans to traditions and ways of life: like the elimination of an old order, an elimination which the future socialism will be indebted to capitalism for. Perhaps it is because of the pitiless brutality of the operation, or because what was destroyed was a form of “primitive communism,” bringing resources and means into common use, the fact remains that he saw in it a “theft,” or the destruction of the right of the poor to ensure their subsistence.

If, today, the reference to enclosures matters, it is because the contemporary mode of extension of capitalism has given it all its actuality. The privatization of resources that are simply essential to survival, such as water, is the order of the day, as well as that of those institutions which, in our countries, had been considered as ensuring a human right, like education. Not that the management of water has not been a source of profit, and that capitalism hasn’t largely profited from the production of well-trained and disciplined workers. What has changed is that henceforth it is a matter of direct appropriation, under the sign of the privatization of what were public services.

And privatization doesn’t stop there. The reference to enclosures is very directly activated by this “knowledge economy” to which I have already alluded, because what the latter promotes is nothing other than the disappearance of the line separating public and private research and the direct appropriation of what had, until now, benefited from a (relative) autonomy. The production of knowledge today is considered as a stake that is too important to allow this minimal autonomy to researchers, who are now subjected to the imperative to establish partnerships with industry, to define acquiring a patent as the desirable success par excellent, and the creation of “spin-offs” as the glorious dream. All that with public money, which gets sucked up into multiple spin-offs that fail, while those that succeed will be purchased, without too much risk, together with their patents, by one or another consortium.

In short, the distribution between what the state lets capitalism do and what capitalism gets the state to do has changed. The state lets capitalism appropriate what was defined as falling within from the public domain, and capitalism gets the state to endorse the sacred task of having to hunt down those who infringe the now sacrosanct right to intellectual property—a right that extends over practically everything, from the living thing to knowledges previously defined as freely accessible to all their users. A right to which WTO [World Trade Organization] intends to subject the entire planet, in the name of the defense of innovation.

From the conceptual point of view, the fact that in the name of competition workers are exploited today with a rare intensity, without even talking

about the *sweatshops* reserved for poor countries, or about the appearance in our countries of “poor workers” who aren’t capable of making ends meet on their salaries, doesn’t count for much. But above all, as in every theater of concepts, we are functioning here in the long, even the indefinite, term.

COMMON CAUSES

However, the people in the street is an image that I do not want to give up, because it is an image of emancipation that can be unlinked from the grand, epic prospect. After all, before our cities were reconfigured according to the imperatives of frictionless circulation, purified of threats to the public order that crowds and mixing together can always constitute, the people were in the street. But to prevent this image from becoming a poison, an abstract dream, perhaps it is worth transforming the image of what a street is. For the grand boulevards that lead to the places of power, a labyrinth of interconnected streets could be substituted, that is to say, a multiplicity of gatherings around what forces thinking and imagining together, around “common” causes, none of which has the power to determine the others, but each one of which requires that the others also receive the power of causing to think and imagine those that they gather together. Because if a cause is isolated, it always risks being dismembered according to the terms of different preexisting interests. And it also risks provoking a closing up of the collective on itself, the collective then defining its milieu in terms of its own requirements, not as that with which links must be created—which is what has happened to scientific communities. In short, a cause that receives the power to gather is, par excellence, that which demands not to be defined as good, or innocent, or legitimate, but to be treated with the lucidity that all creation demands.

NOTES

This piece is excerpted from Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism*, trans. Andrew Goffey (Lüneburg, Germany: Open Humanities Press/Meson Press, 2015), available at <http://openhumanitiespress.org/books/titles/in-catastrophic-times>.

1. “Objecteurs de croissance” after “objecteurs de conscience”: a more long-winded translation that would make the point would be to call them “conscientious objectors to economic growth.”

2. This is what Philippe Pignarre and I have associated with the power of the sorcerer to cast spells.

3. Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 1:873.

9 | Historical Transformations

When history is written as it ought to be written, it is the moderation and long patience of the masses at which men will wonder, not their ferocity.

—C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*

9.1 Conflict Groups, Group Conflicts, and Social Change

RALF DAHRENDORF

INTENSITY AND VIOLENCE: THE VARIABILITY OF CLASS CONFLICT

What is it—we must ask—about class conflicts that is variable and therefore subject to the influence of factors to be identified? In this question, the categories of intensity and violence are essential. That conflict is variable means that its intensity and violence are variable; but the two may vary independently and are, therefore, distinct aspects of any conflict situation.

The category of intensity refers to the energy expenditure and degree of involvement of conflicting parties. A particular conflict may be said to be of high intensity if the cost of victory or defeat is high for the parties concerned. The more importance the individual participants of a conflict attach to its issues and substance, the more intense is this conflict. For class conflict a continuum might be constructed ranging, e.g., from a conflict within a chess club that involves but a small segment of the individual personalities concerned to the overriding class conflict, in [Karl] Marx's analyses, in which individuals are engaged with almost their entire personalities. In operational terms, the cost aspect is here crucial. Members of a group that strives to upset the authority structure of a chess club stand to lose less in case of defeat than members of a trade union who endeavor to change the authority structure of the enterprise (or their own social conditions by way of this authority structure).¹ The cost of defeat, and with it the intensity of conflict, differs in these cases.

By contrast to its intensity, the violence of conflict relates rather to its manifestations than to its causes; it is a matter of the weapons that are chosen

by conflict groups to express their hostilities. Again, a continuum can be constructed ranging from peaceful discussions to militant struggles such as strikes and civil wars. Whether or not class conflict expresses itself in militant clashes of interest is in principle independent of the intensity of involvement of the parties. The scale of degree of violence, including discussion and debate, contest and competition, struggle and war, displays its own patterns and regularities.² Violent class struggles, or class wars, are but one point on this scale.

GROUP CONFLICT AND STRUCTURE CHANGE

Having now assembled the elements of a theory of class conflict, it is our task, in conclusion, to specify how structure changes are brought about by class conflict and under which specific conditions particular modes of structure change must be expected.

[There are] at least three modes of structure change, each of which requires some comment. A first mode of change, in this sense, consists in the total (or near-total) exchange of the personnel of positions of domination in an association. This is clearly the most sudden type of structure change. Generally speaking, total exchange of ruling personnel might also be described as revolutionary change. It is at this point that the sociology of revolution ties in with the theory of group conflict.

Far more frequently we encounter in history, and especially in modern history, a second mode of structure change, namely, the partial exchange of the personnel of positions of domination. Such partial exchange signifies evolutionary rather than revolutionary change.

But probably more important than either of these is a third mode of structure change by class conflict that does not involve any exchange of personnel. It is possible for structure changes in directions intended by subjected groups to be inaugurated without any members of these subjected groups penetrating into dominant positions. This seemingly accidental consequence of the process of social conflict occurs in democratic and totalitarian countries alike. Strange as it may initially appear that structure change should ever occur without an exchange of ruling personnel, there are nevertheless numerous illustrations in the history of states, enterprises, churches, and other associations. To be sure, this third mode of structure change marks the slowest type of evolution and requires particular skill on the part of the rulers to avoid such suppression of opposing interests as thereby to provoke revolts;³ it can nevertheless enable a dominant class to maintain the legitimacy of its authority over long periods of time.

Possibly, these three modes of structure change indicate the end points and center of a scale that measures the suddenness of change. Partial exchange of

personnel is evidently a broad category that covers the whole field between total exchange and complete stability. However, while it may be said that structure change is more sudden in the extent to which more personnel is exchanged, this does not necessarily mean that it is also more radical. Suddenness and radicalness of structure change are two dimensions of this phenomenon that can vary independently, much as the intensity and violence of class conflicts can vary independently. There are examples of relatively sudden changes that are accompanied by but slight modifications of values and institutions, and there are examples of extremely radical, although comparatively slow, evolutions.⁴

The relation between the radicalness-suddenness dimension of structure change and the intensity-violence dimension of class conflict is more than merely logical. It may be argued that the suddenness of change varies directly with the violence of conflict. The more violent class conflicts are, the more sudden are the changes wrought by it likely to be. In this sense, effective conflict regulation serves to reduce the suddenness of change. Well-regulated conflict is likely to lead to very gradual change, often near the third mode distinguished above. Conflict regulation may, in fact, constitute a machinery for forcing on dominant groups recognition of the interests of subjected groups, which are then incorporated in policy. The example of a wage claim settled by conciliation is a case in point. Uncontrolled conflict, on the other hand, always threatens the incumbents of positions of domination in their very possession of authority; it aims at a total exchange of leading personnel and, in this sense, at sudden change.

At least in theory, there is also a scale of the radicalness of structure change. However, an operational formulation of such a scale offers particular difficulties. In general, the radicalness of structure changes is evidently a function of what in particular historical situations represents the status quo. In eighteenth-century Europe, the peaceful utilization of nuclear energy would certainly have made for extremely radical changes, both technical and social. In twentieth-century Europe, the same process, although still involving some change, has no really radical consequences but simply ties in with continuing trends of rationalization, automation, etc. Similarly—and more immediately to the point here—changes resulting from conflicts within the association of the Catholic church are, in most countries of today, far less radical than they were at earlier times. Thus, the radicalness of structure change is not merely a consequence of the intensity of class conflict. Within certain limits, however, this relation does obtain. The more strongly people are involved in given conflicts, the more far-reaching are their demands likely to be, and the more radical will be the changes resulting from this conflict, irrespective of the suddenness of such changes. Radicalness and suddenness of change, like intensity and violence of conflict, may coincide, but more

often they diverge; and in any case their divergence presents more interesting problems of social analysis than their coincidence.

In general, however, and without losing sight of additional intervening variables, we can propose that different modes of structure change co-vary with different modes of class conflict. The more intense class conflict is, the more radical are the changes likely to be that it brings about; the more violent class conflict is, the more sudden are structure changes resulting from it likely to be. Structure change is the final element of the theory of group conflict under discussion. Like all other elements of this theory, it represents but a segment of more inclusive phenomena of conflict and change. Possibly, the typology of change introduced in the preceding pages is applicable also to the consequences of kinds of conflict other than that between classes.

NOTES

This piece is excerpted from Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1959). Copyright © 1959 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Jr. University; renewed 1987. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

1. I have as yet not given a systematic exposition of the patterns of change effected by class conflict; the formulation in the text may therefore give rise to misunderstandings. These will, I hope, be cleared up in the section on class conflict and structure change later in this chapter. [Editors' note: Dahrendorf refers to a passage not included in this selection.]

2. In terms of the distinction thus introduced, we are now able to reformulate the contrast between the conception of conflict here assumed and that of several other authors. The latter tend to confine the term "conflict" to one point on the scale of degree of violence—namely, highly violent clashes. In the present study, however, conflict is conceived as including the whole scale—i.e., any clash of interest independent of the violence of its expressions.

3. The history of the Catholic church provides examples of both: the skillful handling of slow changes of policy without exchange of personnel, and the degeneration of this pattern into suppression and consequent revolt.

4. In fact, the two concepts of revolution so often interchanged in the literature may be differentiated in terms of the distinction between suddenness and radicalness. The industrial revolution was probably more radical than the French Revolution, yet it was not nearly as sudden. The term *revolution* is often used indiscriminately for both particularly radical and particularly sudden changes. I should prefer to use it in the latter sense only.

9.2 Debt

The First 5,000 Years

DAVID GRAEBER

The fact that medieval money took such abstract, virtual forms—checks, tallies, paper money—meant that questions like these ("What does it

mean to say that money is a symbol?”) cut to the core of the philosophical issues of the day. Nowhere is this so true as in the history of the word *symbol* itself. Here we encounter some parallels so extraordinary that they can only be described as startling.

When Aristotle argued that coins are merely social conventions, the term he used was *symbolon*—from which our own word *symbol* is derived. *Symbolon* was originally the Greek word for “tally”—an object broken in half to mark a contract or agreement, or marked and broken to record a debt. So our word *symbol* traces back originally to objects broken to record debt contracts of one sort or another. This is striking enough. What’s really, remarkable, though, is that the contemporary Chinese word for *symbol*—*fu*, or *fu hao*—has almost exactly the same origin.¹

SO WHAT IS CAPITALISM, ANYWAY?

We are used to seeing modern capitalism (along with modern traditions of democratic government) as emerging only later: with the Age of Revolutions—the industrial revolution, the American and French revolutions—a series of profound breaks at the end of the eighteenth century that became fully institutionalized only after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Here we come face to face with a peculiar paradox. It would seem that almost all elements of financial apparatus that we’ve come to associate with capitalism—central banks, bond markets, short-selling, brokerage houses, speculative bubbles, securitization, annuities—came into being not only before the science of economics (which is perhaps not too surprising) but also before the rise of factories, and wage labor itself.² This is a genuine challenge to familiar ways of thinking. We like to think of the factories and workshops as the “real economy,” and the rest as superstructure, constructed on top of it. But if this were really so, then how can it be that the superstructure came first? Can the dreams of the system create its body?

All this raises the question of what capitalism is to begin with, a question on which there is no consensus at all. The word was originally invented by socialists, who saw capitalism as that system whereby those who own capital command the labor of those who do not. Proponents, in contrast, tend to see capitalism as the freedom of the marketplace, which allows those with potentially marketable visions to pull resources together to bring those visions into being.

Starting from our baseline date of 1700, then, what we see at the dawn of modern capitalism is a gigantic financial apparatus of credit and debt that operates—in practical effect—to pump more and more labor out of just about everyone with whom it comes into contact, and as a result produces an

endlessly expanding volume of material goods. It does so not just by moral compulsion but above all by using moral compulsion to mobilize sheer physical force. At every point, the familiar but peculiarly European entanglement of war and commerce reappears—often in startling new forms. The first stock markets in Holland and Britain were based mainly in trading shares of the East and West India companies, which were both military and trading ventures. For a century, one such private, profit-seeking corporation governed India. The national debts of England, France, and the others were based in money borrowed not to dig canals and erect bridges but to acquire the gunpowder needed to bombard cities and to construct the camps required for the holding of prisoners and the training of recruits. Almost all the bubbles of the eighteenth century involved some fantastic scheme to use the proceeds of colonial ventures to pay for European wars. Paper money was debt money, and debt money was war money, and this has always remained the case. Those who financed Europe's endless military conflicts also employed the government's police and prisons to extract ever-increasing productivity from the rest of the population.

It is the secret scandal of capitalism that at no point has it been organized primarily around free labor.³ The conquest of the Americas began with mass enslavement and then gradually settled into various forms of debt peonage, African slavery, and “indentured service”—that is, the use of contract labor, workers who had received cash in advance and were thus bound for five-, seven-, or ten-year terms to pay it back. Needless to say, indentured servants were recruited largely from among people who were already debtors. In the 1600s there were at times almost as many white debtors as African slaves working in southern plantations, and legally they were at first in almost the same situation, since in the beginning, plantation societies were working within a European legal tradition that assumed slavery did not exist, so even Africans in the Carolinas were classified as contract laborers.⁴ Of course this later changed when the idea of “race” was introduced. When African slaves were freed, they were replaced, on plantations from Barbados to Mauritius, with contract laborers again: though now ones recruited mainly in India or China. Chinese contract laborers built the North American railroad system, and Indian “coolies” built the South African mines. The peasants of Russia and Poland, who had been free landholders in the Middle Ages, were only made serfs at the dawn of capitalism, when their lords began to sell grain on the new world market to feed the new industrial cities to the west.⁵ Colonial regimes in Africa and Southeast Asia regularly demanded forced labor from their conquered subjects or, alternately, created tax systems designed to force the population into the labor market through debt. British overlords in India, starting with the East India Company but continuing under Her Majesty's

government, institutionalized debt peonage as their primary means of creating products for sale abroad.

This is a scandal not just because the system occasionally goes haywire, as it did in the Putumayo, but because it plays havoc with our most cherished assumptions about what capitalism really is—particularly that, in its basic nature, capitalism has something to do with freedom. For the capitalists, this means the freedom of the marketplace. For most workers, it means free labor. Marxists have questioned whether wage labor is ultimately free in any sense (since someone with nothing to sell but his or her body cannot in any sense be considered a genuinely free agent), but they still tend to assume that free wage labor is the basis of capitalism. And the dominant image in the history of capitalism is the English workingman toiling in the factories of the industrial revolution, and this image can be traced forward to Silicon Valley, with a straight line in between. All those millions of slaves and serfs and coolies and debt peons disappear, or if we must speak of them, we write them off as temporary bumps along the road. Like sweatshops, this is assumed to be a stage that industrializing nations had to pass through, just as it is still assumed that all those millions of debt peons and contract laborers and sweatshop workers who still exist, often in the same places, will surely live to see their children become regular wage laborers with health insurance and pensions, and their children, doctors and lawyers and entrepreneurs.

When one looks at the actual history of wage labor, even in countries like England, that picture begins to melt away. In most of medieval northern Europe, wage labor had been mainly a lifestyle phenomenon. From roughly the age of twelve or fourteen to roughly twenty-eight or thirty, everyone was expected to be employed as a servant in someone else's household—usually on a yearly contract basis, for which they received room, board, professional training, and usually a wage of some sort—until they accumulated enough resources to marry and set up a household of their own.⁶ The first thing that “proletarianization” came to mean was that millions of young men and women across Europe found themselves effectively stuck in a kind of permanent adolescence. Apprentices and journeymen could never become “masters” and, thus, never actually grow up. Eventually, many began to give up and marry early—to the great scandal of the moralists, who insisted that the new proletariat were starting families they could not possibly support.⁷

Men like [Adam] Smith and [Jeremy] Bentham were idealists; even utopians. To understand the history of capitalism, however, we have to begin by realizing that the picture we have in our heads, of workers who dutifully punch the clock at 8:00 A.M. and receive regular remuneration every Friday, on the basis of a temporary contract that either party is free to break off at any time, began as a utopian vision, was only gradually put into effect even

in England and North America, and has never, at any point, been the main way of organizing production for the market, ever, anywhere.

This is actually why Smith's work is so important. He created the vision of an imaginary world almost entirely free of debt and credit, and therefore, free of guilt and sin; a world where men and women were free to simply calculate their interests in full knowledge that everything had been prearranged by God to ensure that it will serve the greater good. Such imaginary constructs are of course what scientists refer to as "models," and there's nothing intrinsically wrong with them. Actually I think a fair case can be made that we cannot think without them. The problem with such models—at least, it always seems to happen when we model something called "the market"—is that, once created, we have a tendency to treat them as objective realities, or even fall down before them and start worshipping them as gods. "We must obey the dictates of the market!"

Marx, who knew quite a bit about the human tendency to fall down and worship our own creations, wrote *Das Kapital* in an attempt to demonstrate that, even if we do start from the economists' utopian vision, so long as we also allow some people to control productive capital, and, again, leave others with nothing to sell but their brains and bodies, the results will be in many ways barely distinguishable from slavery, and the whole system will eventually destroy itself. What everyone seems to forget is the "as if" nature of his analysis.⁸ Marx was well aware that there were far more bootblacks, prostitutes, butlers, soldiers, peddlers, chimneysweeps, flower girls, street musicians, convicts, nannies, and cabdrivers in the London of his day than there were factory workers. He was never suggesting that that's what the world was actually like.

In all this, the advent of the free-floating dollar marks not a break with the alliance of warriors and financiers on which capitalism itself was originally founded but its ultimate apotheosis. Neither has the return to virtual money led to a great return to relations of honor and trust: quite the contrary. By 1971, the change had only just begun. The American Express card, the first general-purpose credit card, had been invented a mere thirteen years before, and the modern national credit-card system had only really come into being with the advent of Visa and MasterCard in 1968. Debit cards were later, creatures of the 1970s, and the current, largely cashless economy only came into being in the 1990s. All of these new credit arrangements were mediated not by interpersonal relations of trust but by profit-seeking corporations, and one of the earliest and greatest political victories of the U.S. credit card industry was the elimination of all legal restrictions on what they could charge as interest.

If history holds true, an age of virtual money should mean a movement away from war, empire building, slavery, and debt peonage (waged or

otherwise), and toward the creation of some sort of overarching institutions, global in scale, to protect debtors. What we have seen so far is the opposite. The new global currency is rooted in military power even more firmly than the old was. Debt peonage continues to be the main principle of recruiting labor globally: either in the literal sense, in much of East Asia or Latin America, or in the subjective sense, whereby most of those working for wages or even salaries feel that they are doing so primarily to pay off interest-bearing loans. The new transportation and communications technologies have just made it easier, making it possible to charge domestics or factory workers thousands of dollars in transportation fees, and then have them work off the debt in distant countries where they lack legal protections.⁹ Insofar as overarching grand cosmic institutions have been created that might be considered in any way parallel to the divine kings of the ancient Middle East or the religious authorities of the Middle Ages, they have not been created to protect debtors but to enforce the rights of creditors. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is only the most dramatic case in point here. It stands at the pinnacle of a great, emerging global bureaucracy—the first genuinely global administrative system in human history, enshrined not only in the United Nations, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization but also in the endless host of economic unions and trade organizations and nongovernmental organizations that work in tandem with them—created largely under U.S. patronage. All of them operate on the principle that (unless one is the United States Treasury) “one has to pay one’s debts”—since the specter of default by any country is assumed to imperil the entire world monetary system, threatening, in [Joseph] Addison’s colorful image, to turn all the world’s sacks of (virtual) gold into worthless sticks and paper.

All true. Still, we are speaking of a mere forty years here. But [Richard] Nixon’s gambit, what [Michael] Hudson calls “debt imperialism,”¹⁰ has already come under considerable strain. The first casualty was precisely the imperial bureaucracy dedicated to the protection of creditors (other than those that were owed money by the United States). IMF policies of insisting that debts be repaid almost exclusively from the pockets of the poor were met by an equally global movement of social rebellion (the so-called antiglobalization movement—though the name is profoundly deceptive), followed by outright fiscal rebellion in both East Asia and Latin America. By 2000, East Asian countries had begun a systematic boycott of the IMF. In 2002, Argentina committed the ultimate sin: they defaulted—and got away with it. Subsequent U.S. military adventures were clearly meant to terrify and overawe, but they do not appear to have been very successful, partly because, to finance them, the United States had to turn not just to its military clients but, increasingly, to China, its chief remaining military rival. After the near

total collapse of the U.S. financial industry, which despite having been very nearly granted rights to make up money at will, still managed to end up with trillions in liabilities it could not pay, bringing the world economy to a standstill, eliminated even the pretense that debt imperialism guaranteed stability.

There is very good reason to believe that in a generation or so, capitalism itself will no longer exist—most obviously, as ecologists keep reminding us, because it's impossible to maintain an engine of perpetual growth forever on a finite planet, and the current form of capitalism doesn't seem to be capable of generating the kind of vast technological breakthroughs and mobilizations that would be required for us to start finding and colonizing any other planets. Yet faced with the prospect of capitalism actually ending, the most common reaction—even from those who call themselves “progressives”—is simply fear. We cling to what exists because we can no longer imagine an alternative that wouldn't be even worse.

How did we get here? My own suspicion is that we are looking at the final effects of the militarization of American capitalism itself. In fact, it could well be said that the last thirty years have seen the construction of a vast bureaucratic apparatus for the creation and maintenance of hopelessness, a giant machine designed, first and foremost, to destroy any sense of possible alternative futures. At its root is a veritable obsession on the part of the rulers of the world—in response to the upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s—with ensuring that social movements cannot be seen to grow, flourish, or propose alternatives; that those who challenge existing power arrangements can never, under any circumstances, be perceived to win.¹¹ To do so requires creating a vast apparatus of armies, prisons, police, various forms of private security firms and police and military intelligence apparatus, and propaganda engines of every conceivable variety, most of which do not attack alternatives directly so much as create a pervasive climate of fear, jingoistic conformity, and simple despair that renders any thought of changing the world seem an idle fantasy. Maintaining this apparatus seems even more important, to exponents of the “free market,” even than maintaining any sort of viable market economy. How else can one explain what happened in the former Soviet Union? One would ordinarily have imagined that the end of the Cold War would have led to the dismantling of the army and the KGB and rebuilding the factories, but in fact what happened was precisely the other way around. This is just an extreme example of what has been happening everywhere. Economically, the apparatus is pure dead weight; all the guns, surveillance cameras, and propaganda engines are extraordinarily expensive and really produce nothing, and no doubt it's yet another element dragging the entire capitalist system down—along with producing the illusion of an endless capitalist future that laid the groundwork for the endless bubbles to begin with. Finance capital

became the buying and selling of chunks of that future, and economic freedom, for most of us, was reduced to the right to buy a small piece of one's own permanent subordination.

In other words, there seems to have been a profound contradiction between the political imperative of establishing capitalism as the only possible way to manage anything, and capitalism's own unacknowledged need to limit its future horizons lest speculation, predictably, go haywire. Once it did, and the whole machine imploded, we were left in the strange situation of not being able to even imagine any other way that things might be arranged. About the only thing we can imagine is catastrophe.

NOTES

This piece is excerpted from David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2011). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

1. As far as I know, the only scholar to have pointed out the connection is Bernard Faure, a French student of Japanese Buddhism. See Bernard Faure, "The Buddhist Icon and the Modern Gaze," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 3 (1998): 798; Bernard Faure, *Visions of Power: Imagining Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 225.

2. Joint-stock corporations were created in the beginning of the colonial period, with the famous East India Company and related colonial enterprises, but they largely vanished during the period of the industrial revolution and were mainly revived only at the end of the nineteenth century, and then principally, at first, in America and Germany. As Giovanni Arrighi has pointed out, the heyday of British capitalism was marked by small family firms and high finance; it was America and Germany, who spent the first half of the twentieth century battling over who would replace Great Britain as hegemon, that introduced modern bureaucratic corporate capitalism. Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1994).

3. This is a point demonstrated in great detail in an important book by Yann Moulier-Boutang, which unfortunately has never been translated into English. See Yann Moulier-Boutang, *De l'esclavage au salariat: Economie historique du salariat bride* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997).

4. Kenneth Gordon Davies, *The North Atlantic World in the Seventeenth Century* (St. Paul: University of Minnesota Press, 1975), 59. *Indentured* comes from the indentations or notches on a tally again, since these were widely used as contracts for those who, like most indentured servants, couldn't read. William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (London: E. Duyckinck, 1827), 1:218.

5. Immanuel Wallerstein provides the classic analysis of this "second" serfdom. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, vol. 1 (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

6. This was true, incidentally, across the class spectrum: everyone was expected to do this, from lowly milkmaids and apprentices to "ladies in waiting" and knight's pages. This was one reason, incidentally, why indentured-service contracts did not seem like much of a jump in the seventeenth century: they were simply lengthening the term of contracted employment from one to five or seven years. Even in medieval times there were also adult day laborers, but these were often considered indistinguishable from simple criminals.

7. The very word *proletariat* in a way alludes to this, as it's taken from a Roman term for "those who have children."

8. Usually in order to conclude that today, of course, we are living in an entirely different world, because clearly that's not true anymore. It might help here to remind the reader that Marx saw himself as writing a "critique of political economy"—that is, of theory and practice of economics of his day.

9. Even the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) now ordinarily refers to such arrangements as "slavery," though technically debt peonage is different.

10. Michael Hudson, "Overview: The Bubble and Beyond," August 10, 2012, available at <http://michael-hudson.com/2012/08/overview-the-bubble-and-beyond>.

11. I have observed this firsthand on any number of occasions in my work as an activist: police are happy to effectively shut down trade summits, for example, just to ensure that there's no possible chance that protestors can feel they have succeeded in doing so themselves.

9.3 When the Future Began

FRANCO "BIFO" BERARDI

THE END OF MODERN POLITICS

The parties of the Left, which, in the course of the twentieth century, have betrayed and dispersed the ideals and expectations of the working class in order to avoid disappearing altogether, are today desperately seeking to pick up the same thread with the new generations. But the heirs of Leninism and Social Democracy are no longer capable of interpreting the signs that come from the new social reality, and oscillate between a "reformist" position of subordination to liberal hypercapitalism and a "resistant" position that repropose old ideologies in a defensive and residual form.

Participation in political life has appeared to progressively diminish and there does not seem to be any remedy for this disaffection. The populations of Western countries do not renounce the exercise of the electoral right to vote. But voting is an ever decreasing sign of true political participation, because everyone realizes that rather than being able to decide between real alternatives, they are only able to pick the faces and names of those who will impose prepackaged and inevitable decisions on them.

Since the time in 1981 when François Mitterand, six months after being elected president of the French Republic, abandoned the socialist program that had been presented to voters, recognizing in an explicit way the impossibility of governing without following the rules imposed by large economic forces, it has been evident that *right* and *left* are two words deprived of substantial signification. If political discourse has any sense, it indicates the ability of associated human beings to choose between alternatives. Inasmuch as these alternatives no longer exist because automatisms prevail, at this point

politics no longer exists and political participation becomes a ritual without significance in which citizens participate only through conformism.

But there is an even more radical and insurmountable reason for which the political message of modernity cannot be translated into the language of the latest generations, the video-electronic generation, born at the end of the 1970s, and the connective generation born in the first years of the 1990s. Intergenerational transmission has become impossible because of a problem of cognitive formats and not only because of a problem of contents. The mind of the generation that was formed within the technical conditions of video-electronics, and then that which is being formed internally to the connective conditions of the net, functions in a manner that is increasingly incompatible with the alphabetic, critical, historical mind—that is to say, the mind of modern humanity, the one that believed in the political possibility of choosing between alternatives.

I have always found the concept of generation suspect. In the past industrial era, the concept of social class defined processes of identification and conflicts much better. Social classes do not coincide completely with generations, because the formation lines of social class consciousness pass through processes of production and distribution of income, rather than through generational memberships. In the industrial era, generational succession had a marginal importance and could neither determine effects of radical differentiation nor influence politically significant forms of consciousness and identification. As long as political subjectivity was formed internally to the social division of labor, generational subjectivity was only a sociobiological concept, unsuitable for defining the historical characteristics of subjective consciousness.

But the postindustrial transformation has confused the terms of the problem. On an objective level, social and economic stratifications have certainly not been lessened, but this no longer seems in a position to produce decisive effects of identification on the level of consciousness. The fragmentation and increasing precariousness of productive processes has rendered social identity extremely fragile, at the same time as identity is made ever more imaginary and consciousness vectoral. In postmodern processes of identification, what we are is less important than what we could be, and today the formation of subjectivity passes through a differential branding of a generational type that is much more significant than it was in the past.

With the concept of generations we are making reference to a human togetherness that shares a temporally defined technological, cognitive, and imaginary formative environment. In the past era of modernity this formative environment changed slowly over time, while productive and economic relations and the relationships between social classes changed in a much more

pronounced way. But once alphabetic technologies gave way to digitalization, this transformation has intervened to radically modify the modalities of learning, memorization, and linguistic exchange, and the formative density of generational belonging has become decisive.

At this point we no longer identify the concept of generations with simply a biological phenomenon but rather with a technological and cognitive phenomenon, the trans-subjective self-constitution of a common horizon of conscious and experiential possibility. The transformation of the technocognitive environment redefines the possibilities and limits of individuation.

Because of this, I believe that it is necessary to identify the new forms of social consciousness beginning from generational belonging. And for this reason I speak of two decisive successive shifts in a mutation that has led to the draining of humanistic categories and of the perspectives on which modern politics was based. These two passages are constituted in the subsumption of the human mind in formation within two successive technological configurations of the media-sphere. The first is that which I call video-electronic, meaning the technologies of televisual communication. It is a case of the passage that Marshall McLuhan speaks of in his fundamental 1964 study, *Understanding Media*.

McLuhan looks at the transition from the alphabetic sphere to the video-electronic one and concludes that when the simultaneous succeeds the sequential, the capacity of mythological elaboration succeeds that of critical elaboration. The critical faculty presupposes a particular structuring of the message: the sequentiality of writing, the slowness of reading, and the possibility of judging in sequence the truth or falsity of statements. It is in these conditions that the critical discrimination that has characterized the cultural forms of modernity becomes possible. But in the sphere of video-electronic communication, critique becomes progressively substituted by a form of mythological thinking in which the capacity to distinguish between the truth and falsity of statements becomes not only irrelevant but impossible. This passage took place in the techno-sphere and media-sphere of the 1960s and 1970s, and the generation that was born at the end of the 1970s began to manifest the first signs of impermeability to the values of politics and critique that had been fundamental for the preceding generations of the twentieth century.

The more radical mutation was the diffusion of digital technologies and the formation of the global Internet during the 1990s. Here, the functional modality of the human mind changes completely, not only because the conditions of communication become infinitely more complex, saturated, and accelerated but rather because the infantile mind begins to form itself in a media environment completely different from that of modern humanity.

WHEN THE FUTURE BEGAN

What happened in Italy in 1977 is difficult to understand in the framework of modern political concepts. At the time, Italy was in a deeply conflictual period, and a strong movement of students and young proletarians had surfaced, challenging economic and state power.

The year 1977 is generally recorded as a year of violence. Indeed it was the year that the Red Brigades started their crazy, bloody campaigns, and the riots that exploded in the streets of Rome, Bologna, and many other towns at the time were not at all peaceful meetings and friendly promenades. But violence was not an issue when the movement broke out. It became an issue when the police reacted violently to the demonstrations, when the government ordered their repression and the police shot dead students in Bologna and in Rome, and elsewhere.

There was a rage in the air. This was not only because 15 percent of the population, especially young people, was unemployed. There was a kind of existential rage, a wave of insubordination that was not confined to Italy.

Rather than focus on the violent side of 1977, I prefer to concentrate on the heterogeneous faces of the cultural process that emerged when baby boomers all over the world were hit by the premonition that the modern horizon was drawing to its dissolution.

I want to talk about the general landscape of the 1970s, and it is here that I want to situate the Italian uprising. 1977 is not an Italian year: it is the year when Steve Wozniak and Steven Jobs created the trademark of Apple and, what is more, created the tools for spreading information technology; when Alain Minc and Simon Nora wrote *L'informatisation de la société*, a text that theorizes the coming dissolution of nation-states as a result of the political effects of emerging telematics.

In that year Yuri Andropov, secretary of the KGB, wrote a letter to Leonid Brezhnev, arguing that the Soviet Union was in danger of disappearance if the gap with the United States in the field of informatics was not bridged. It was the year when Jean François Lyotard wrote the book *La condition postmoderne*. The year when Charlie Chaplin died; the man with the bowler hat and the cane passed away. This was the year of the end of the twentieth century: the turning point of modernity.

What is special about the Italian situation is not the smoke of the riots and Molotov cocktails. In that experience you can see both faces of the changing times: the happy utopian side of creativity and the despair and hopelessness, and terror.

1977 saw the last revolt of the communist proletarians of the twentieth century against capitalist rule and against the bourgeois state. But at the same

time it saw the first revolt of the cognitariati, the intellectual workers, and of Technische Wissenschaft Intelligenz.

In the culture produced during that year, we can see the premonition of a new cultural process and a new social landscape. In a rhetorical way, I could call it the first rebellion of the new times that we are living now. But I cannot be sure of this, I do not know if the time we are living now will be again a time of insurrection. Maybe yes, maybe not.

In a certain sense it could be said that we are witnessing the realization of a bad dream, of the dystopian imagination that was present in the movement that exploded in 1977. For that movement was not only, as the legend goes, a happy event, the free expression of creativity. Contained within was a perception of a deep social deterritorialization, of an economic change bound to destroy the human landscape of the cities, bound to subjugate every fragment of time.

In the very chronology of that year we can see the happy phase, which began in 1976 rather than in 1977. But in the months after the violent uprisings in Rome and Bologna, March 1977, one can also see a changing perception, the feeling of terror. In that transition there is something that totally escapes the political framework.

THE SOCIAL CONFLICT AND POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

I am not a historian, so I cannot reconstruct the historical sequence in a precise way, but I will do my best.

If one looks at the social situation in Italy in 1975–1976 there was 15 percent unemployment, mostly among young people. Since 1969 the factories of the northern cities had been ebullient. In Mirafiori, Alfa Romeo, Petrolchimico, the most important strongholds of the working class, young militants organized radical autonomous struggles, often criticizing the unionist agenda and the political agenda of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). The occupation of Fiat Mirafiori in 1973 was probably the most impressive action against capitalist rule in those years. The majority of the workers in the biggest factory in Italy decided to occupy the place during a long confrontation with the owners. Fiat was the center of economic power, and that struggle became the symbol of resistance of people against capitalist rule.

The young people who had been hired in Fiat during the previous years were mostly migrants coming from the South; Fiat hired young men from Calabria, Sicilia, and from Naples. For those young people it was difficult to exchange the sunny coast of southern Italy, the laziness, the sensuousness of life in the Mediterranean villages, with the smoky, foggy, stressful life of the industrial city.

The occupation was a success. The union and the managers were forced to negotiate on the occupiers' terms. After the struggle of March 1973, when

the autonomous organization of the workers decided on the occupation of the factory, the directors of Fiat blocked the turnover of the labor force. No more hiring.

That year, Syria and Egypt attacked Israel on the day of Yom Kippur. The effects of the following war were resented all over the world. Oil prices went crazy. The Western economy was hit terribly leading to recession and crisis with unemployment rising everywhere. The Italian government declared that a period of austerity was necessary and that people had to make sacrifices for the sake of the economy, salaries must stay down, and workers must work harder.

Following this, some people in a demonstration in the streets of Bologna launched the cry:

Loro dicono austerità, noi diciamo dissolutezza sfrenatezza festa.
They say "austerity," we answer: "dissolution, licence, feast."

Un'onda di leggerezza si diffonde.
A wave of lightness and irresponsibility.

We do not want to pay sacrifice to the God Economy. We do not believe in the dogma of productivity. We shan't give our life to the gross national product.

Se l'economia è malata che crepi.
If the economy is sick, may it crack.

I happened to be in Turin in 1973. In that year, all over Europe the car manufacturing factories were washed by a wave of social conflicts. In Fiat Torino, Opel of Russelsheim, Volkswagen and Renault of Billancourt, a massive upheaval of young car-making workers stopped the assembly lines and pushed modern industrial capitalism toward its end. In the Mirafiori factory during the days of the occupation, I saw people disguised as *indiani metropolitani* for the first time: young workers, long-haired with a red scarf around their neck, playing drums in the factory shops.

A square filled with thousands of cars prepared for testing—the horns sounding, hundreds of them. Then the crowd of young workers walked out of the factory beating iron drums. This act of refusal of the sadness of the factory is the premise of the explosion of 1977.

This new generation of workers did not have so much to do with the old tradition of the labor parties. Or anything to do with the socialist ideology of a state-owned system. A massive refusal of the sadness of work was the leading element behind their protest. Those young workers had much more

to do with the hippie movement, much more to do with the history of the art avant-garde.

Futurism, Surrealism, and Dadaism tried to reinvent the process of political organization. Umberto Eco wrote a paper about this subject, with the title *C'è una nuova lingua: L'italo-indiano* (There is a new language: Italo-Indian), where he emphasized the linguistic dimension of the new revolt. There he says the people of the new movement are the children who have read the poems of the Futurists and are using electronic media for the first time. This is creating a sort of mass avant-garde. Thanks to the technology of the mass media, language is becoming the main site of social confrontation. Poetry (the language that creates shared worlds) had entered the sphere of social change.

This was the starting point of the creation of semio-capitalism, the new regime characterized by the fusion of media and capital. In this sphere, poetry meets advertising and scientific thought meets the enterprise.

Here one can see the conditions of the explosion: 15 percent unemployment, mostly young people, social conflict spreading everywhere, and a strong government supported by a parliament where the unified political parties passed repressive laws.

But I am also interested in explaining the social and cultural background. The general framework of the social transformation was the relationship between young workers refusing work in the factories, and students, researchers, and intellectual laborers. “Operai e studenti uniti nella lotta” was not an empty slogan, it was a good picture of the situation marked by the emergence of a movement of mass intellectuality as a social actor.

Hans Jürgen Krahl, one of the leaders of the student movement in Germany, was the author of a text very important to those times: *Thesen Über Technisch Wissenschaft Intelligenz*. In it Krahl said that the problem of political organization was no longer disconnected from the social machinery (like in the Leninist age) but was rooted in the self-organization of intellectual labor. Cognitive labor was shifting toward the center of the social scene.

If we are able to connect the refusal of work and techno-scientific intelligence we may discover that intellectual labor is not labor but freedom. The application of technology to automation creates the conditions for a reduction of working time. The relationship between students and workers is based not on ideology but on the understanding of a common ground in the field of knowledge, technology, and freedom from labor.

THE YEAR OF PREMONITION

We can see 1977 as the year of the last movement of proletarians against the capitalist rule but also as the year of the announcement of the end of the modern

age, the sudden consciousness that in the sphere of modernity no more future is given. The culture of that year involves not only a critique of the capitalist society but also a critique of modernity. Here also lies the root of the ambiguity of that culture, the double edge of a certain romantic communitarianism that has opened the way to the right-wing reclamation of traditional values.

In the culture of that generation of rebels who read [Martin] Heidegger and [Friedrich] Nietzsche, [William S.] Burroughs and Philip K. Dick, there was a new consciousness that capitalism is organic to the anthropological forms that modernity is made of. The problem of technics is put on the table by the movement of the refusal of work. Technology is not viewed as a mere system of tools but is perceived as a totalizing dimension, opening infinite possible bifurcations, and simultaneously imposing an inescapable framework of economic constraints. The end of futures that the culture of that year intuited was this closure of the horizon of possibilities. This is why the parable of 1977 is going from utopian rebellion to the clear-eyed despair of impending dystopian developments.

The movement of 1977 proclaimed that “democracy is dying,” and it was accused of being antidemocratic. We were only remarking on a trend: the politics of representation is working falsely. Democracy is becoming more an empty ritual, devoid of the ability to deliver true alternatives and true choices.

In the sphere of modernity, politics was decision and choice between alternatives, but since capitalism is able to conjugate the power of economy and the potency of *techne*, the efficacy of political decision is bound to vanish.

Today, thirty years later, the depletion of politics is revealed and evident. The marriage of economy and *techne* has made *democracy* a dead word. 1977 was the sudden consciousness that history is becoming a chain of irreversible automatism. What capitalism has written in the body and in the brain of the human beings has become part of the genetic store.

NOTE

This piece is excerpted from Franco “Bifo” Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-Alpha Generation* (London: Minor Compositions, 2009). Reprinted by permission of Minor Compositions (<http://www.minorcompositions.info/>).

9.4 Post-Fordist, American Fascism

ANGELA MITROPOULOS

Fascism is as American as Henry Ford. And Donald Trump.

While Ford is uncontroversially granted the titular honors in histories of industrial processes and assembly-line production, his politics are routinely

considered to be anomalous to the history and character of the United States. The pervasiveness of that assumption shaped arguments against describing Trump as a fascist. It props up the dubious implication that, presumably, because fascism is an essentially non-American, European, and, indeed, non-Anglophone phenomenon, then Trump could not be a fascist. Such arguments are not made by reference to the politics and positions Trump has espoused. Instead, they are based on a categorical claim that is as metaphysical as it is inaccurate. Ironically, the course of such reasoning is predicated on a concept of racial-national essences, eliminating all evidence to the contrary as the awkward empirical sully of an otherwise ideal national culture or “personality.” They are also arguments that presuppose, in the case of Ford, a distinction between politics and economics that, in doctrine and practice, existed as mutually constitutive elements within the accounting methods of the Fordist family wage,¹ and with regard to the present, they neglect the importance of the decline of the family wage to the appeal of Trump’s call to “make America great again.” The broader analytical point, then, is that fascism is distinguished not by the paraphernalia of the 1930s or by its national iterations but by the very call to restore the purportedly true measure and order of things through the literalism of a revolution that, through a corrective violence, turns things back around, removing the obstacles to their essential unfolding, reverting them to their fundamental nature. In this sense, fascism is not so much the denial of normal politics as it is conceived as the necessary break that restores the ostensibly true and ideal norm whose existence is threatened or whose materialization has been thwarted by that which is foreign to or minor in the course of normal politics.

It is no secret that Henry Ford was a fascist. But it is perhaps enough of an embarrassment that, over time, it has invited a convenient amnesia about both U.S. history and Ford himself. Despite the emotional pull of American exceptionalism and Hollywood-Disney rewrites of the Second World War, it is still possible to discover that Henry Ford was held in such high esteem by Adolf Hitler and the German National Socialist government that, in 1938, he was awarded the Grand Cross of the German Eagle. It is still possible to read how Hitler referred to Henry Ford as “my inspiration” and a “great man.”² Whole passages in Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (*My struggle*) were lifted from Ford’s steady stream of texts denouncing “the Jewish conspiracy,” most of them written before Hitler had become leader of the National-Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, or NSDAP); many of them had been circulating in Europe before Hitler joined the NSDAP, some of them going on at some length about the “Jewish problem” in Germany. Hitler would give his autobiography a similar title to Ford’s *My Life and Work*, which had been published around three years prior.³ Historians

might quibble about how much of the company's newspaper—the ironically named *Dearborn Independent*—and those writings compiled into a series of booklets under the title *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*⁴ were penned by Henry, were ghostwritten or simply written to order. But no one has plausibly suggested that Ford was not a staunch proponent of fascism. Indeed, it would be impossible to ignore Ford's influence on the relentless dogma of German National Socialism without partaking in denial. It also requires some effort to sever the historical links between American concepts of manifest destiny and those of European futurism, even leaving aside the borrowing of symbolic gestures that combined both, as with the American flag salute (or “Bellamy salute”), which was changed to the “hand over heart” in the early 1930s after it was adopted—and has since come to be known—as the exemplary Nazi salute in Europe. So when observers remark on the numbers of people—both in the audience at Trump rallies and from the stage of the Republican convention that nominated Trump, such as Laura Ingraham—who have gestured with a fascist salute, they are also pointing to an impulse and link that has been long forgotten but is nevertheless recurrent.

The point is that European fascism has never been entirely European. On the contrary, it is a global phenomenon that emerged from an effort to reconfigure a brutal, colonial glory. European fascism borrowed heavily and was inspired by the “race wars” it perceived as significant to the formation of the United States and other settler colonies such as Australia for two very clear reasons: that these were indeed European settler colonies that served as the inspiration for an expansive, triumphant concept of racial supremacy and that fascism has always been as traditionalist as it has been modernist. Its concept of racial identity contains both a racial origin story and a victorious telos. European fascism took its cues from the techniques of control and subjugation that were previously exported from Europe in the process of colonization and wars of conquest, and fascism has always been one pole within a capitalist dialectic that oscillates between the purity of a substantive identity and abstract citizenship.⁵ Which is also to say that the history of fascism does not begin with Europe but, on the contrary, with a European, colonial capitalism—and more specifically, with the importation back into Europe of the techniques of control, the brutality of an eliminative violence, and the aesthetics of nostalgia and efficiency that were cultivated in Europe's colonies for well over a century before the 1930s. In this sense, Chip Berlet's argument that fascism is marked by a desire to restore the German Fourth Reich, “a European import” that can be categorically distinguished from American nativism, reverses the course of history for the purposes of imagining that, among other things, American nativism—indeed, the United States itself—is not, too, a kind of European import.⁶ Any cursory history of the

lager or concentration camp would begin with its formal invention during the Second Boer War in southern Africa and the Spanish wars in Cuba in the late 1800s. A fuller history might include such the broader range of detention and deportation measures, such as the Indian Removal Act of 1830 in the United States.

In other words, and as Justin Mueller put it, it is something of “an ideological manoeuvrer” to insist “that early 20th century fascists were an exceptional evil, emerging out of nothing and returning to that nothing.”⁷ But if it is possible to note the effort involved in what seems like a determined attempt to deny complicity on the part of those who feel a filial connection with American exceptionalism, the question that interests me far more is what fascism means or would look like when it is not embedded within the seemingly paradoxical nexus of assembly-line efficiency and nationalist mysticism that shaped the “reactionary modernism” of German National Socialism or Italian fascism. What would the combination of nationalist myth and the affective labor processes of the entertainment industry mean for the politics and techniques of fascism?

At its height, the *Dearborn Independent* was as much a production line as were Ford’s car factories. And in Ford’s industrial schema, these two circuits—of laboring, gendered bodies and their accompanying ideologies of cookie-cutter domesticity—were both closely linked and neatly circumscribed by factory, household, and school. The newspaper went from a print run of well under seven thousand to around seven hundred thousand, was sent to schools, and was distributed widely through subscription at every Ford dealership. Throughout the 1920s, Ford vehemently defended his dream of a mercantile-rural utopia composed of neatly parcelized, patriarchal American families fortified against the probability that the United States would, in some statistically projected future, be a nation of nonwhite immigrants ruled over by Jews. He did so at the same time as he decided to merge his German assets with the petrochemical giant IG Farben—one of the major beneficiaries of German National Socialism and the company that would go on to build and run IG Farben Auschwitz, among other horrors. Labor process histories might often focus on Ford’s innovations in sequential manufacturing and time-and-motion efficiencies in granting him the titular honor of naming an era of capitalism after Henry Ford, but the broader implication includes not just the extent to which it formalized the demarcation of home and factory as linked items within the accounting of the Fordist family wage but also the emphasis placed on regarding “social problems” as analogous to deviations from norms, which could in turn be “solved” through the application of the principles of efficiency and the elimination of waste—hence “the Jewish problem” and “the final solution.”

As for comparisons: Like Trump, Ford was a billionaire mogul. If the printed news, the family car, and integrated, assembly-line production were the hallmarks of Ford's industrial empire, Trump's postindustrial value hinges instead on the intersection of entertainment and real estate, and the failure of every political commentator and analyst—outside, that is, of the tumult of social media—to comprehend this shift was also their failure to predict Trump's rise and rise through the Republican primaries. Indeed, the attempt to compose a left-wing populism on the basis of the claim that the rich were buying elections faltered on much the same misunderstanding—Trump's campaign relied largely on “free” media purchased with the currency of an ugly hyperbole that lifted ratings and realigned the attention economy. Like Trump, Ford had considered running for the U.S. presidency. What there was of polling at the time put a prospective Ford presidency at around 35 percent, though no doubt the polling was undertaken as part of an effort to promote a possible run. I am unsure why Ford's nomination never eventuated. I leave that question to historians. Yet what is clear about Trump's campaign for the U.S. presidency is that it weighed in with a promise to make racism enjoyable and entertaining “again,” and, at the same time, that reassembling of racial affection is conducted not through print but digital media. It is perhaps not necessary to reiterate the ways in which Trump has invoked the extreme measures of ideological certification, the labeling of Muslims, the prominence of white supremacists among his backers, or the launching of his presidential campaign with an immense racial slander against Mexicans to point out that Trump's campaign is a hyperracist campaign that is fascist not because it is excessive but because it is predicated on a concept of restoring, through a quasi-messianic, revolutionary violence, the essential origin, purity, and telos of *the* American people.

If we rely on a definition of fascism that depends on a method of ideal types and the associated technique of comparative national histories, we are liable to a series of errors whose comforting (self-)descriptions easily subdue any inaccuracies and facts that run counter to the stories we tell ourselves about what fascism is, has been, and might become. The insistence on deriving a definition of fascism, its presumably eternal and unchanging essence, from the comparison of past instances may well be the conventional method of comparative sociology, but it is also the method from which the concept of race was derived. It is not a method that contemporary biology (or any science) uses, so why use it as a sociological or philosophical method for discussing (let alone analyzing) fascism? It is not only, then, that the critical alarm should have been raised as each successive political commentator and analyst called on to hold forth on established media platforms about the prospects of Trump's candidacy got it remarkably wrong. It is that episte-

mological failures so pronounced and widely held are instructive of so much more than intellectual error. In resorting to a knowledge of things and the future based on categorical typification, we are also partaking in a logic of categorical purity that is not all that different from the politics of essences from which fascism draws its violent reasons and rationality. The point is not that every essentialism is the same. It is that taxonomy is, at best and as even Aristotle warned, a rough convention in thought but an odious and ferocious rule in power.

Moreover, the distinction between democracy and fascism is as “post-factual” a claim as are Trump’s daily pronouncements, which are deployed for effect and affect. There is very little about fascism that proves it is inherently antagonistic to democracy. For the racist, all problems of democracy can be resolved by redrawing the border, eliminating that which is not-proper to the singular identification of a *people* (as part of the project of establishing the *kratos* or rule of the *demos*, a people), and expelling the foreign so as to restore the purity of the category and the rule of essences. It should not be necessary to repeat that both Hitler and Mussolini achieved political power through constitutional means to know that fascism is an intrinsic part of the dynamic of democracy, or that Greek fascism so often hinged on the call to defend democracy from “the barbarians,” though the reminder is important given that it becomes a means of obscuring the levels of support for fascism, as well as its recurrent appeal. It is against the substitution of an identitarian concept of “*the working class*” (presumably always one) that, in “Nazism and the Working Class, 1933–93,” Sergio Bologna foregrounded one of the key indicators of a propagandistic approach to understanding fascism: “If we adopt a monolithic concept of the working class,” then, he argued, “inevitably our judgement on its behaviour in relation to the Nazi regime will end up being schematic—either for or against, either opposition or submission.”⁸ And as Götz Aly and others have shown, in its functioning German National Socialism amounted, on the one hand, to the restoration of a generous welfare state system for “true” Germans and, on the other hand, a violence against those who were deemed unproductive, parasitical, or improperly generative so as to either purge them, force them to be productive “again,” or both.⁹ Along similar lines, Dagmar Herzog and others have argued that fascism is in this regard simultaneously repressive and motivating of desires, as when “the Nazis also used sexuality to consolidate their appeal, [as with] . . . the inseparability of homophobia from injunctions to happy heterosexuality.”¹⁰ These are ways of understanding a fascist subjectivity that foregrounds an analysis of its material, affective impulses rather than a propagandistic statement that declares fascism to be inexplicable in terms of both intimate and broader capitalist dynamics. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari were

likewise critical of the tendency to force an idealist break between a macro- and micro-fascism. As they put it:

Desire is never separable from complex assemblages that necessarily tie into molecular levels, from microformations already shaping postures, attitudes, perceptions, expectations, semiotic systems, etc. Desire is never an undifferentiated instinctual energy, but itself results from a highly developed, engineered setup rich in interactions: a whole supple segmentarity that processes molecular energies and potentially gives desire a fascist determination.¹¹

To understand fascism, then, it is crucial to understand the scalable iterations, both material and symbolic, that range between the domestic economy (or *oikos*) and the politics and law of the household (*oikonomia*) as a concept of proper generation. From this perspective, the effort to reduce an analysis of Trump to a contest between Clinton and Trump not only wildly misses the point. It misses the point because the stakes are elsewhere, the expressive recourse to the awkward sexism that accompanies an affection for understandings of the political as the decisive hand of a unitary power vis-à-vis the unruly but subjectless forces of economics, or the weaker version of much the same, which somehow manages to blame the rise of fascist sympathies (among straight white men) on the apparently liquefying and traumatic effects of “identity politics” and “globalization.”¹² This is a shallow understanding of political theory and history that treats fascist sympathizers as mistreated children who should not be held to account for their violent feelings and in which the unity of the nation-state and its claim to representation of is not examined very far—certainly not far enough to even wonder about whose identity is tacitly represented as a matter of course in normative concepts of the political.

Yet, as per the conventions of Western philosophy, democracy is the rule of equality, whereas the *oikos* is a space of a natural, or qualitative, hierarchy (or domestic tyranny). This convention cannot give an account as to why fascism has always taken place within democracies. This is the problem for those who attempt to define it as if the call for an exception means it is indeed exceptional and anomalous. Yet fascism is what happens when the norms of the rule of the *demos* are violently suspended by the hierarchical rules of the *oikos* so as to restore equality among those who are deemed to be rightfully equal by nature. Fascism is what happens when “domestic violence” goes public and political, is justified through elaborate forms of victim-blaming and an inverted view of victimization, is enjoyed and encouraged without limit, and spills out from the privatized spaces of the home and into the

streets, or halls, restoring the purportedly true order and measure of things, the balance between and separation of qualitative rankings (construed as race and gender) and a quantitative equality in which “all men are born equal.” So while it is not possible to explain fascism as if this were the expression of a single individual, it is also not possible to understate the importance of a singular figure who seemingly floats outside and above “regular politics” and, at the same time, in that singularity represents an indivisible, unmediated political-affective connection between “a person” and “a people” (or *demos*). The brutal father-führer is pivotal to fascism’s conflation between nation and family, the figure that promises to restore the mythical coherence of the polity when that unique coherence is perceived as endangered.

The difficulty that some have with seeing the fascism in Trump’s politics has little to do with whether Trump is a fascist. Obviously he is a fascist. It is that they have no concept of how racism, sexism, and homophobia are part of the same processes and dynamics within capitalism—and, by implication, no theory of either Fordist capitalism in the 1930s or the Trumpist capitalism of the early twenty-first century. And whether or not Trump succeeds in winning the U.S. presidency, or paves the way for an escalation of violence with claims of election fraud and hints about the Second Amendment, indeed whether or not one chooses to call Trump a fascist, avoiding a confrontation with a revanchist, post-Fordist oikopolitics would be a serious mistake.

NOTES

This essay is a revised version of Angela Mitropoulos, “Fascism, from Fordism to Trumpism,” *s0metim3s* (blog), December 17, 2015, available at <https://s0metim3s.com/2015/12/17/fascism-from-fordism-to-trumpism>, and Angela Mitropoulos, “Leftist Anti-fascism,” *s0metim3s* (blog), March 23, 2016, available at <https://s0metim3s.com/2016/03/23/antifa>.

1. Angela Mitropoulos, *Contract and Contagion: From Biopolitics to Oikonomia* (New York: Minor Compositions/Autonomedia, 2012), 28–29.

2. Timothy W. Ryback, *Hitler’s Private Library: The Books That Shaped His Life* (New York: Knopf, 2008), 71; David Lanier Lewis, *The Public Image of Henry Ford: An American Folk Hero and His Company* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1976), 143; see also Neil Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003).

3. Henry Ford and Samuel Crowther, *My Life and Work* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1922).

4. Henry Ford, *The International Jew: The World’s Foremost Problem* (Chicago: Dearborn, 1920).

5. Angela Mitropoulos, “Cross-Border Operations,” interview by Mathew Kiem, *New Inquiry*, November 18, 2015, available at <https://thenewinquiry.com/cross-border-operations>; Angela Mitropoulos and Brett Neilson, “Cutting Democracy’s Knot,” *Culture Machine* 8 (2006), available at <http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/view/40/48>; Lorenzo Veracini, “Colonialism Brought Home: On the Colonization of the

Metropolitan Space,” *Borderlands* 4, no. 1 (2005), available at <http://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2343&context=lhapapers>.

6. Chip Berlet, “Corporate Press Fails to Trump Bigotry,” *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting*, September 17, 2015, available at <http://fair.org/home/corporate-press-fails-to-trump-bigotry>.

7. Justin Mueller, “Trump of the Will: Taking Donald Trump’s Fascism Seriously,” *Common Dreams*, September 4, 2015, available at <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/09/04/trump-will-taking-donald-trumps-fascism-seriously>.

8. Sergio Bologna, “Nazism and the Working Class, 1933–93,” trans. Ed Emery, paper presented at the Milan Camera del Lavoro, June 3, 1993.

9. Götz Aly and Jefferson S. Chase, *Hitler’s Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008); Götz Aly, Susanne Heim, and Allan Blunden, *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction* (London: Phoenix Paperbacks, 2003).

10. Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality and German Fascism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 5.

11. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 237.

12. That is the gist of the argument made by Don Watson, who is otherwise famous for being the speechwriter of the Australian Labor prime minister, Paul Keating, who introduced the automatic detention of undocumented migrants. Don Watson, *Enemy Within: American Politics in the Time of Trump*, Quarterly Essay 63 (Melbourne: Black, 2016).

10 | New Modalities of Collective Action

Capitalism leaves the subject the right to revolt, preserving for itself the right to suppress that revolt.

—Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*

'Twas in Pennsylvania town not very long ago
Men struck against reduction of their pay
Their millionaire employer with philanthropic show
Had closed the work till starved they would obey
They fought for home and right to live where they had toiled so long
But ere the sun had set some were laid low
There're hearts now sadly grieving by that sad and bitter wrong
God help them for it was a cruel blow.

CHORUS

God help them tonight in their hour of affliction
Praying for him whom they'll ne'er see again
Hear the orphans tell their sad story
“Father was killed by the Pinkerton men.”

Ye prating politicians, who boast protection creed,
Go to Homestead and stop the orphans' cry.
Protection for the rich man ye pander to his greed,
His workmen they are cattle and may die.
The freedom of the city in Scotland far away
'Tis presented to the millionaire suave,
But here in Free America with protection in full sway
His workmen get the freedom of the grave.

—William W. Delaney, “Father Was Killed by the Pinkerton Men”

10.1 From Globalization to Resistance

STAUGHTON LYND

What should be the principles of our common resistance to globalization? I am going to suggest certain principles, but I am concerned that the moment I do so, we will become lost in a discussion of labels. So let me

begin in a different way by holding up as a model or mantra the activity of the resistance movement in the third society subject to NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement]—and, of course, more grievously subject to it than either the United States or Canada—namely, Mexico.

The Zapatista movement in Chiapas seems to me extraordinary in at least the following ways:

Without participating in electoral politics, the Zapatistas have ended seventy-one years of uninterrupted government by the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI. How have they done this? One critical component is a vast effort at popular education. Mayan peasants, who had never before left their native villages, traveled all over Mexico meeting with popular organizations such as the rebelling students at the national university.

Of course, the Zapatistas are not nonviolent in any traditional sense. But neither are they a traditional Latin American guerrilla movement. Without giving up either their arms or the principle of armed struggle, they have carried on for the last five years an essentially nonviolent resistance. For example, the Mexican government has sought to build roads into the Lacondón jungle that is the Zapatista stronghold. The government claimed that this was to help farmers get their produce to market. The real reason, obviously, was to be able to move soldiers and military gear into the area. At the western edge of the jungle is a village named Amadór. During the summer and fall of 1999, the soldiers seeking to build the road were met each day by a *cordón* (a picket line) of women from Amadór. Since many of the soldiers were indigenous, the women appealed to them to recognize their true interests and to put down their weapons. To prevent this dialogue the government played music through loudspeakers. I lost track of this encounter for about a year. Then I noticed that after Vicente Fox became president, he announced the abandonment of a number of military bases in Chiapas. The first base to be abandoned was at Amadór.

I shall attempt to generalize from Zapatista reality by proposing the following principles:

1. *In resisting globalization, workers should rely on their own self-activity expressed through organizations at the base that they themselves create and control.*
2. *We should seek to win over or neutralize the armed forces.*
3. *We need to build more than organizations, more even than a movement: we need to build a community of struggle.*

In offering these words as guiding principles, I once again emphasize that they are only words, and plead with you not to fetishize these words and not

to engage in what the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, following [Karl] Marx, called the “misplaced concreteness” of mistaking words for things.¹

Finally, by way of introduction, of course, I understand that these principles will only take on life as the contradictions of capitalism provide opportunities for social transformation. Just since the first of the year, world overcapacity in the production of steel and automobiles has resulted in two steel company bankruptcies in Youngstown, and last Tuesday’s announcement by Daimler Chrysler that it will halt promised renovation of its Windsor truck assembly plant and lay off an entire shift on July 1. The issue is not whether there will be economic instability. There will be. The issue is whether we, the movement for change, will be ready to do something with it.

SELF-ACTIVITY

First, then, *self-activity*. The closest equivalent in a language other than English I have thus far found is the Russian word *samodeyatelnost*, used by [Leon] Trotsky in his youthful critique of Leninist centralism, and by Alexandra Kollontai, who used the term in the early years of the Bolshevik Revolution on behalf of the emerging women’s movement and the Workers’ Opposition. The closest synonym in English to “self-activity” is, perhaps, “participatory democracy.” But there are others: government from below, self-organization. Again, it is not the words but the thing that matters.

I champion the idea of self-activity in contrast to the practice of national, bureaucratic, top-down trade unions. National trade unions, as they exist in the United States and Canada; as they existed in Great Britain, Germany, and elsewhere in Europe in the early twentieth century; as they have existed anywhere in the capitalist world and will exist anywhere in the globalized economy, are inherently opposed to the practice of self-activity by rank-and-file workers. This is true regardless of what persons may hold the top offices in those unions. The first principle of a resistance movement against globalization must be not to concentrate energy on campaigns for national union office, any more than we make campaigns for national political office our first priority. Of course, it makes a difference who wins these campaigns. That doesn’t mean we should spend our time working in them. Like the Zapatistas, we should influence national electoral campaigns by our nonelectoral self-activity at the base.

Why is it that national trade unions will never be able to play a leading role in our movement to get rid of capitalism and substitute something better for it? Because national trade unions are irrevocably linked to capitalism. They will inevitably find ways to make their peace with profit-making corporations. They will always stop short of fundamental social transformation.

They are and will remain Social Democratic, meaning, their historical project is reform, not revolution; their nature is to try to make capitalism livable. This is a necessary project, but as Rosa Luxemburg said, it is a labor of Sisyphus: it could go on forever and never really change the system.

So what is the difference between the path of our labor movement Founding Fathers, like John L. Lewis and Walter Reuther, and the path that many of us are trying to walk today?

Those in the tradition of the Founding Fathers are preoccupied with taking power in *national* unions. Local union office is seen as a stepping-stone. The rhetoric is of “taking back our union,” when, in reality, no national union—not the Miners, not the Auto Workers, not the Steelworkers, not the Teamsters—has ever been controlled by its rank and file.

The other path takes its inspiration from the astonishing re-creation from below throughout the past century of ad hoc central labor bodies: the local workers’ councils known as “soviets” in Russia in 1905 and 1917; the Italian factory committees of the early 1920s; solidarity unions in Toledo, Minneapolis, San Francisco, and elsewhere in the States in the early 1930s; and similar formations in Hungary in 1956, Poland in 1980–1981, and France in 1968 and 1995.

These were all *horizontal* gatherings of all kinds of workers in a given *locality*, who then form regional and national networks with counterpart bodies elsewhere. Unlike national trade unions, local unions can provide continuity between the moments when such ad hoc bodies come out of the ground like mushrooms and indeed—to vary the metaphor—have the potential to be important building blocks and organizing centers for more spontaneous formations.

This is what workers do when they are truly emancipating themselves. It is the participatory democracy of the 1960s alive and well in the movement of the new century.

FRATERNIZING WITH THE TROOPS

Much more briefly, let me touch on the other two principles proposed.

Seeking to win over the armed forces responds to the question “What do we do about the fact that the other side will always have more weapons?” and offers the simple answer: we seek to win over or neutralize the soldiers. This goes for police officers, including the Fraternal Order of Police in Philadelphia; for prison guards; for self-appointed deputies like members of the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi; and for members of each nation’s armed forces. We don’t call them “pigs” or “fascists.” We try to understand them as human beings.

This practice has three ideological variations. The first is pacifism, broadly defined. At the Pentagon demonstration in October 1967, a man who had named himself “Superjoel” relates:

I was between Abbie [Hoffman] and Dr. Spock. We’re walking up on the grounds of the Pentagon. And on top of this pile of trash there’s this bunch of flowers, daisies, right. I grabbed them. I saw these soldiers and they’re all standing there, and they were my age. So I just took the flowers and one by one, boom, boom, boom, put ‘em in the gun barrels.²

The crowd began to call out to the troops, “Join us!” More than three years later, on May 3, 1970, a student at Kent State University named Allison Krause—one of the four students killed the next day—put a flower in the gun barrel of a National Guardsman, saying: “Flowers are better than bullets.” These events signified a change in the attitude of the antiwar movement toward the GIs, whose refusal to fight would ultimately bring the war to an end.

A second strain of ideology that calls for fraternization with the armed forces derives from Vatican II and liberation theology. Its most celebrated exemplar was Archbishop Oscar Romero. On March 23, 1980, Romero delivered a homily in which he addressed the Salvadoran armed forces and stated:

Brothers, you are from the same people; you kill your brother peasants. . . . No soldier is obliged to obey an order that is contrary to the will of God. Now it is time for you to recover your consciences so that you first obey conscience rather than a sinful order. . . . In the name of God, then, in the name of this suffering people, whose cries rise to the heavens, every day more tumultuously, I ask you, I beg you, I order you in the name of God; stop the repression.

The next day Romero paid for these words with his life.

The third ideological tradition that calls for doing everything possible to win over the armed forces is Marxism. Trotsky, after the triumph of the Red Army that he commanded, discussed this theme in his *History of the Russian Revolution* as it applied both to the revolution of February 1917, which overthrew the tsar, and to the Bolshevik Revolution the next fall.

Trotsky sketched the February events along lines that later scholarship has only confirmed. On February 23, International Women’s Day, “the February revolution was begun from below, overcoming the resistance of its own revolutionary organizations, the initiative being undertaken of their own accord

by the most oppressed and downtrodden part of the proletariat—the women textile workers, among them no doubt many soldiers’ wives.”³ Detachments of soldiers were called in to assist the police, but there were no encounters.

The next day, February 24, the number of demonstrators doubled. As the crowd moved toward the center of Petrograd, injured soldiers in some of the war hospitals waved whatever was at hand in support. At length the crowd stood face to face with mounted troops, the Cossacks. The Cossacks charged repeatedly. The crowd parted to let them through. “The Cossacks promise not to shoot” passed from mouth to mouth.

It was very much in the streets of Petrograd as it would be eighty-two years later in the road at Amadór.

When women and soldiers faced each other on the turbulent streets, old women at the head of the demonstration stepped toward the mounted soldiers, pleading: “We have our husbands, fathers, and brothers at the front. But here we have hunger, hard times, injustice, shame. The government mocks us instead of helping us. You also have your mothers, wives, sisters, and children. All we want is bread and to end the war.” According to Trotsky, the women went “up to the cordons more boldly than men, [took] hold of the rifles, beseech[ed], almost command[ed]: ‘Put down your bayonets—join us.’” Again and again the Cossacks refused to ride down the demonstrating women.⁴

And what about Serbia? There one saw last fall what can fairly be called a nonviolent revolution. A political movement won an election. When the incumbent regime initially refused to recognize the election results, an outraged populace poured into the streets. On the evening of Friday, September 29, the coal miners of the Kolubara region, who produce the coal required for half of Serbia’s output of electricity, declared an indefinite general strike. The general in charge of the armed forces, and police from the Interior Ministry, showed up on Tuesday, October 3, and Wednesday, October 4. The miners adopted a dual strategy. On the one hand, they removed vital parts from the mine machinery and challenged the soldiers to mine coal with bayonets. On the other hand, they summoned twenty thousand supporters from nearby communities. The police held their ground but made no arrests. The next day, Thursday, October 5, hundreds of thousands of people in Belgrade—forty miles away—seized the parliament and the state TV station, and the police in Kolubara melted away. The Kolubara strike was coordinated not by a “trade union” but by a “workers’ committee.” All over Serbia following [Vojislav] Kostunica’s accession to power, local committees of workers displaced hated

factory managers. I realize that a cynic might say that this was a transition from socialism to capitalism, not the other way around. But surely, Serbia also shows us that fundamental social transition, revolution, remains possible in the twenty-first century and that neutralizing the armed forces by mass nonviolent direct action can be a critical component of the process.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF STRUGGLE

Finally, and still with desperate brevity, I invite you to look at the most difficult problem of all: building a community of struggle.

During the past fifty years, my wife and I have been associated with a commune in the hills of Georgia where we expected to spend the rest of our lives; with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS); with the work community of a legal services office where I was employed for eighteen years; and with three large local unions led by persons who were, if not radicals, at least militant reformers. Every one of these entities went out of existence or continued, after internal struggle, as a two-dimensional caricature of its former self. And in every case the reason for the disintegration or decay of the community of struggle was that the human beings who made it up could not resolve their problems with each other, could not remain, as we used to say in the South, a band of brothers and sisters standing in a circle of love. It wasn't COINTELPRO, the FBI, or Ronald Reagan that did us in. We did it to ourselves.

In the case of the commune, the issue was whether we had all to believe in the same religious creed in order to resolve deep personal problems. SNCC and SDS fractured, I believe, under the combined pressure of (1) the emergence of black power, (2) the frustrations of trying to end the war in Vietnam, and (3) the advent of Marxist grouplets confident that they had all the answers and we did not. With all three local unions, it was a matter of personalities in each reform slate splitting over issues connected with the next election.

I wish I could believe that these were problems confined to the United States. I fear they are not. Look at the Russian Revolution. Look at the Cultural Revolution in China. Look at Polish Solidarity. Even in Canada, it may be that you have occasionally experienced what I am trying to describe: the apparently limitless capacity of the Left for self-destruction and fratricide. A resistance movement against globalization, it would seem, must have some response to these intractable evils.

My own response is still very much in process, but let me share it, such as it is. I think there is a difficulty with the concept of "organizing." No doubt most of us would piously reject the idea of a Leninist vanguard party. But the

concept of “organizing” that most of us might applaud also tends to be vanguardist. The organizer says—does he or she not?—“I know what you ought to think, or at a minimum, what organization you should join and pay dues to.” There is an inequality from the outset between organizer and organizee. Moreover, given that inequality, as well as the inequality between the organizer and the supervisor to whom he or she reports, there is less listening and consensual problem-solving than there should be, resentments are not expressed and fester, and individual careerism comes to the fore at the first opportunity.

In Latin America—for example, once again, in the work of Archbishop Romero—there is the different concept of “accompaniment.” I do not organize you. I accompany you, or more precisely, we accompany each other. Implicit in this notion of “*acompañando*” is the assumption that neither of us has a complete map of where our path will lead. In the words of Antonio Machado: “Caminante, no hay camino. Se hace camino al andar.” (Seeker, there is no road. We make the road by walking.)

Accompaniment has been, in the experience of myself and my wife, a discovery and a guide to practice. Alice first formulated it as a draft counselor in the 1960s. When draft counselor meets counselee, she came to say, there are two experts in the room. One may be an expert on the law and administrative regulations. The other is an expert on what he wants to do with his life. Similarly as lawyers, in our activity with workers and prisoners, we have come to prize above all else the experience of jointly solving problems with our clients. They know the facts, the custom of the workplace or the penal facility, the experience of past success and failure. We too bring something to the table. I do not wish to be indecently immodest, but I will share that I treasure beyond any honorary degree actual or imagined the nicknames that Ohio prisoners have given the two of us: “Mama Bear” and “Scrapper.”

I have begun to wonder whether the concept of “accompaniment,” in addition to clarifying the desirable relationship of individuals in the movement for social change to one another, also has application to the desirable relationship of groups. A great deal of energy has gone into defining the proper relationship in the movement for social change of workers and students; blacks and whites; men and women; straights and gays; gringos, ladinos and *indígenas*; and no doubt, English speakers and French speakers. An older wave of radicalism struggled with the supposed leading role of the proletariat. More recently other kinds of division have preoccupied us. My question is what would it do to this discussion were we to say that we are all accompanying one another on the road to a better society?

I came to this notion in an interesting way. Marty Glaberman, an honored friend and colleague, kept telling me that the fullest expression of spontaneous workers’ councils was the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and that

the best book describing them was *Hungary '56* by Andy Anderson. Finally he sent me the book. I read it. And what to my wondering eyes did appear but the following:

At the 20th Congress of the Russian Communist Party in February 1956, Khrushchev denounced the misdeeds of Stalin. In April 1956, Hungarian students formed the Petofi Circle, named for a patriotic poet of the nineteenth century. "Soon, the meetings of the Petofi Circle were attracting thousands of people."⁵ The issue was freedom to speak and write the truth. As of September 1956, protest was still in the hands of intellectuals. The demonstrations that became a revolution in October were organized by the Petofi Circle and other student groups. Workers joined in, magnificently, with far-reaching demands. But students came first.

This information set something free inside myself. For twenty-five years I have been conscientiously pursuing the project of accompanying the working class. But in my former incarnation, in the 1960s, it was students who sat in at a Woolworth lunch counter to kick off the civil rights movement of the following decade, and it was students who first went out into the streets against the war. Workers opposed the war just as strongly as did middle-class constituencies. Working-class soldiers, black and white, ultimately refused to fight and ended it. But as in Hungary in 1956, so in the 1960s—not only in the United States but also, for example, in France in 1968—students came first.

Having begun to see examples of this sequencing, I started to find it everywhere. In Russia throughout the year 1904, protest was voiced at a doctors' congress, at a conference of teachers, at a series of banquets organized by liberals. At Father [Georgy] Gapon's meetings with workers the demand was voiced: "Workers must join the campaign against the autocracy." The decision to present a petition to the tsar, which led to "Bloody Sunday" in January 1905 and thus to the beginning of the 1905 revolution, was made in Gapon's apartment on November 28, 1904, "the evening after a bloody assault by soldiers on student demonstrators."⁶ Only in the fall of 1905, almost a year after rolling general strikes began to spread across Russia, was the so-called soviet formed in St. Petersburg. And where did it meet? According to its chairman, Trotsky, in the universities. "The doors of the universities," he writes, had "remained wide open. 'The people' filled the corridors, lecture rooms and halls. Workers went directly from the factory to the university."⁷ The first meeting of the soviet was held on the evening of October 13, 1905, at the Technological Institute. The second meeting the next night had to be moved to the physics auditorium of the same institution. Trotsky says that on that evening "the higher educational establishments were overflowing with people."⁸

Why do students so often come first? One can speculate. To whatever extent [Antonio] Gramsci is right about the hegemony of bourgeois ideas,

students and other intellectuals break through it: they give workers the space to think and experience for themselves. Similarly the defiance of students may help workers to overcome whatever deference they may be feeling toward supposed social superiors.

I want to conclude by affirming my hope for the rebirth of the movement for social change in the United States. George W. Bush may do for us what we have been unable to do for ourselves since the collapse of SDS and SNCC at the end of the 1960s. He may organize a new movement. Protest against the death penalty, against George W. Bush as executioner extraordinaire, and against the institutionalized racism of the United States penal system will be a leading edge of the new movement. Old issues, such as the right to vote and gender equality, will reintroduce themselves in the context of resistance to the doctrinaire neoliberalism and lack of compassion of the Bush administration. Students, workers, women, and prisoners will all be involved.

It will be a vast, ragged coalition full of crosscurrents and internal contradictions. Unions like the Steelworkers and the Teamsters may be in the streets on occasion, as in Seattle (in 1999), because they wish to protect the livelihoods of their members from imported steel and Mexican truck drivers. Appearances notwithstanding, this is not international class solidarity and does not express concern for what happens to workers in other countries. Yet for countless individuals who were in the streets with one another, the jubilant shared experience of “turtles and Teamsters together at last” was real, and expressed the spirit of accompaniment I have been trying to describe.

Hopefully, then, as social transformation once again comes onto the agenda in the United States, new networks of solidarity will spring into being between our movement and (for example) the struggles of Local 3903 at York University and Local 598 in Falconbridge; between our movement and your resistance to a private prison at Penetanguishene; between our movement and the work of Marion Traub-Werner and others to protect Nike workers at the Kukdong garment factory in Mexico; between our movement and current efforts to reinvest in your health care system; between our movement and the Father’s Day Coalition at the Hamilton Air Show; between our movement and the folks from all over the world who will gather on the Plains of Abraham in April and, for Desert Scorn, in November in Qatar.

NOTES

This piece is excerpted from Staughton Lynd, “From Globalization to Resistance,” in *From Here to There: The Staughton Lynd Reader*, ed. Andrej Grubacic (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010), 205–218. Reprinted by permission of PM Press (<http://www.pmpress.org>).

1. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 51.

2. Larry Sloman, *Steal This Dream: Abbie Hoffman and the Countercultural Revolution in America* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 99.
3. Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008), 76.
4. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *The February Revolution: Petrograd, 1917* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), citing Trotsky, *History*, [81].
5. Andy Anderson, *Hungary '56* (London: Solidarity, 1964), 42.
6. Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 24.
7. Leon Trotsky, *1905* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 71.
8. *Ibid.*, 91, 93.

10.2 Platform for a Provisional Opposition

GUY DEBORD

A revolutionary action within culture must aim to enlarge life, not merely to express or explain it. It must attack misery on every front. Revolution is not limited to determining the level of industrial production or even to determining who is to be the master of such production. It must abolish not only the exploitation of humanity but also the passions, compensations, and habits that that exploitation has engendered. We have to define new desires in relation to present possibilities. In the thick of the battle between the present society and the forces that are going to destroy it, we have to find the first elements of a more advanced construction of the environment and new conditions of behavior—both as experiences in themselves and as material for propaganda. Everything else belongs to the past, and serves it.

We now have to undertake an organized collective work aimed at a unitary use of all the means of revolutionizing everyday life. That is, we must first of all recognize the interdependence of these means in the perspective of increased freedom and an increased control of nature. We need to construct new ambiances that will be both the products and the instruments of new forms of behavior. To do this, we must from the beginning make practical use of the everyday processes and cultural forms that now exist, while refusing to acknowledge any inherent value they may claim to have. The very criterion of formal invention or innovation has lost its sense within the traditional framework of the arts—insufficient, fragmentary forms whose partial renovations are inevitably outdated and therefore impossible.

We should not simply refuse modern culture; we must seize it in order to negate it. No one can claim to be a revolutionary intellectual who does not recognize the cultural revolution we are now facing. An intellectual creator cannot be revolutionary by merely supporting some party line, not even if he does so with original methods, but only by working alongside the parties

toward the necessary transformation of all the cultural superstructures. What ultimately determines whether or not someone is a bourgeois intellectual is neither his social origin nor his knowledge of a culture (such knowledge may be the basis for a critique of that culture or for some creative work within it), but his role in the production of the historically bourgeois forms of culture. Authors of revolutionary political opinions who find themselves praised by bourgeois literary critics should ask themselves what they've done wrong.

The union of several experimental tendencies for a revolutionary front in culture, begun at the congress held at Alba, Italy, at the end of 1956, presupposes that we not neglect three important factors.

First of all, we must insist on a complete accord among the persons and groups that participate in this united action; and this accord must not be facilitated by allowing certain of its consequences to be dissimulated. Jokers or careerists who are stupid enough to think they can advance their careers in this way must be rebuffed.

Next, we must recall that while any genuinely experimental attitude is usable, that word has very often been misused in the attempt to justify artistic actions within an already-existing structure. The only valid experimental proceeding is based on the accurate critique of existing conditions and the deliberate supersession of them. It must be understood once and for all that something that is only a personal expression within a framework created by others cannot be termed a creation. Creation is not the arrangement of objects and forms; it is the invention of new laws on such arrangement.

Finally, we have to eliminate the sectarianism among us that opposes unity of action with possible allies for specific goals and prevents our infiltration of parallel organizations. From 1952 to 1955 the Lettrist International, after some necessary purges, continually moved toward a sort of absolutist rigor leading to an equally absolute isolation and ineffectuality, and ultimately to a certain immobility, a degeneration of the spirit of critique and discovery. We must definitively supersede this sectarian conduct in favor of real actions. This should be the sole criterion on which we join with or separate from comrades. Naturally this does not mean that we should renounce breaks, as everyone urges us to do. On the contrary, we think that it is necessary to go still further in breaking with habits and persons.

We should collectively define our program and realize it in a disciplined manner, using any means, even artistic ones.

OUR IMMEDIATE TASKS

We must call attention, among the workers parties or the extremist tendencies within those parties, to the need to undertake an effective ideological

action in order to combat the emotional influence of advanced capitalist methods of propaganda. On every occasion, by every hyperpolitical means, we must publicize desirable alternatives to the spectacle of the capitalist way of life, so as to destroy the bourgeois idea of happiness. At the same time, taking into account the existence, within the various ruling classes, of elements that have always tended (out of boredom and thirst for novelty) toward things that lead to the disappearance of their societies, we should incite the persons who control some of the vast resources that we lack to provide us with the means to carry out our experiments, out of the same motives of potential profit as they do with scientific research.

We must everywhere present a revolutionary alternative to the ruling culture; coordinate all the researches that are currently taking place but that lack a comprehensive perspective; and incite, through critiques and propaganda, the most advanced artists and intellectuals of all countries to contact us in view of a collective action.

We should declare ourselves ready to renew discussion, on the basis of this program, with those who, having taken part in an earlier phase of our action, are still capable of rejoining with us.

We must put forward the slogans of unitary urbanism, experimental behavior, hyperpolitical propaganda, and the construction of ambiances. The passions have been sufficiently interpreted; the point now is to discover new ones.

THE SITUATIONISTS AND THE NEW FORMS OF ACTION IN POLITICS AND ART

From now on, any fundamental cultural creation, as well as any qualitative transformation of society, is contingent on the continued development of this sort of interrelated approach.

The same society of alienation, totalitarian control, and passive spectacular consumption reigns everywhere, despite the diversity of its ideological and juridical disguises. The coherence of this society cannot be understood without an all-encompassing critique, illuminated by the inverse project of a liberated creativity, the project of everyone's control of all levels of their own history.

To revive and bring into the present this *inseparable*, mutually illuminating project and critique entails appropriating all the radicalism borne by the workers movement, by modern poetry and art, and by the thought of the period of the supersession of philosophy, from [Georg] Hegel to [Friedrich] Nietzsche. To do this, it is first of all necessary to recognize, without holding on to any consoling illusions, the full extent of the defeat of the entire

revolutionary project in the first third of this century and its official replacement, in every region of the world and in every domain of life, by delusive shams and petty reforms that camouflage and preserve the old order.

Such a resumption of radicality naturally also requires a considerable deepening of all the old attempts at liberation. Seeing how those attempts failed because of isolation, or were converted into total frauds, enables one to get a better grasp of the coherence of the world that needs to be changed. In the light of this rediscovered coherence, many of the partial explorations of the recent past can be salvaged and brought to their true fulfillment. Insight into this reversible coherence of the world—its present reality in relation to its potential reality—enables one to see the fallaciousness of half-measures and to recognize the presence of such half-measures each time the operating pattern of the dominant society—with its categories of hierarchization and specialization and its corresponding habits and tastes—reconstitutes itself within the forces of negation.

Moreover, the material development of the world has accelerated. It constantly accumulates more potential powers, but the specialists of the management of society, because of their role as guardians of passivity, are forced to ignore the potential use of those powers. This same development produces widespread dissatisfaction and objective mortal dangers that these specialized rulers are incapable of permanently controlling.

We will limit ourselves to mentioning a few examples of acts that have our total approval. On January 16 of this year [1957] some revolutionary students in Caracas made an armed attack on an exhibition of French art and carried off five paintings, which they then offered to return in exchange for the release of political prisoners. The forces of order recaptured the paintings after a gun battle with Winston Bermudes, Luis Monselve, and Gladys Troconis. A few days later some other comrades threw two bombs at the police van that was transporting the recovered paintings, which unfortunately did not succeed in destroying it. This is clearly an exemplary way to treat the art of the past, to bring it back into play in life and to reestablish priorities. Since the death of [Paul] Gauguin (“I have tried to establish the right to dare everything”) and of [Vincent] Van Gogh, their work, coopted by their enemies, has probably never received from the cultural world an homage so true to their spirit as the act of these Venezuelans. During the Dresden insurrection of 1849 [Mikhail] Bakunin proposed, unsuccessfully, that the insurgents take the paintings out of the museums and put them on a barricade at the entrance to the city, to see if this might inhibit the attacking troops from continuing their fire. We can thus see how this skirmish in Caracas links up with one of the highest moments of the revolutionary upsurge of the last century and even goes further.

No less justified, in our opinion, are the actions of those Danish comrades who over the last few weeks have resorted to incendiary bombs against the travel agencies that organize tours to Spain, or who have carried out pirate radio broadcasts warning of the dangers of nuclear arms. In the context of the comfortable and boring “socialized” capitalism of the Scandinavian countries, it is most encouraging to see the emergence of people whose violence exposes some aspects of the other violence that lies at the foundation of this “humanized” social order—its monopoly of information, for example, or the organized alienation of its tourism and other leisure activities—along with the horrible flip side that is implicitly accepted whenever one accepts this comfortable boredom: not only is this peace not life, but it is a peace built on the threat of atomic death; not only is organized tourism a miserable spectacle that conceals the real countries through which one travels, but the reality of the country thus transformed into a neutral spectacle is Franco’s police.

Finally, the action of the English comrades [the Spies for Peace], who last April divulged the location and plans of the “Regional Seat of Government #6” bomb shelter, has the immense merit of revealing the degree already attained by state power in its organization of the terrain and establishment of a totalitarian functioning of authority. This totalitarian organization is not designed simply to prepare for a possible war. It is, rather, the universally maintained *threat* of a nuclear war that now, in both the East and the West, serves to keep the masses submissive, to organize *shelters for state power*, and to reinforce the psychological and material defenses of the ruling class’s power. The modern urbanism on the surface serves the same function. In April 1962, in issue 7 of our French-language journal *Internationale Situationniste*, we made the following comments regarding the massive construction of individual shelters in the United States during the previous year:

Here, as in every racket, “protection” is only a pretext. The real purpose of the shelters is to test—and thereby reinforce—people’s submissiveness, and to manipulate this submissiveness to the advantage of the ruling society. The shelters, as a creation of a new consumable commodity in the society of abundance, prove more than any previous commodity that people can be made to work to satisfy highly artificial needs, needs that most certainly remain needs without ever having been desires. The new habitat that is now taking shape with the large housing developments is not really distinct from the architecture of the shelters; it merely represents a less advanced level of that architecture. The concentration-camp organization of the surface of the earth is the normal state of the present society in formation; its condensed subterranean version merely represents that society’s

pathological excess. This subterranean sickness reveals the real nature of the “health” at the surface.

The English comrades have just made a decisive contribution to the study of this sickness and thus also to the study of “normal” society. This study is itself inseparable from a struggle that has not been afraid to defy the old national taboos of “treason” by breaking the *secrecy* that is vital in so many regards for the smooth functioning of power in modern society, behind the thick screen of its glut of “information.” The sabotage in England was later extended, despite the efforts of the police and numerous arrests: secret military headquarters in the country were invaded by surprise (some officials present being photographed against their will), and forty telephone lines of British security centers were systematically blocked by the continuous dialing of ultrasecret numbers that had been publicized.

In order to salute and extend this first attack against the ruling organization of social space, we have organized this “Destruction of RSG-6” demonstration in Denmark. In so doing, we are striving not only for an internationalist extension of this struggle but also for its extension on the “artistic” front of this same general struggle.

NOTE

This piece is excerpted from Guy Debord, “Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency’s Conditions of Organization and Action,” June 1957, trans. Ken Knabb, available at <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/report.htm>, and Guy Debord, “The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics and Art,” June 1963, trans. Ken Knabb, available at <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/newforms.htm>.

10.3 The Temporary Autonomous Zone

HAKIM BEY

The sea-rovers and corsairs of the eighteenth century created an “information network” that spanned the globe: primitive and devoted primarily to grim business, the net nevertheless functioned admirably. Scattered throughout the net were islands, remote hideouts where ships could be watered and provisioned, and booty traded for luxuries and necessities. Some of these islands supported “intentional communities,” whole mini-societies living consciously outside the law and determined to keep it up, even if only for a short but merry life.

I believe that by extrapolating from past and future stories about “islands in the net” we may collect evidence to suggest that a certain kind of “free enclave” is not only possible in our time but also existent. All my research and

speculation has crystallized around the concept of the *temporary autonomous zone* (TAZ).

WAITING FOR THE REVOLUTION

How is it that “the world turned upside-down” always manages to *right* itself? Why does reaction always follow revolution, like seasons in Hell?

Uprising, or the Latin form *insurrection*, are words used by historians to label *failed* revolutions—movements that do not match the expected curve, the consensus-approved trajectory: revolution, reaction, betrayal, the founding of a stronger and even more oppressive state—the turning of the wheel, the return of history again and again to its highest form: jackboot on the face of humanity forever.

By failing to follow this curve, the *up-rising* suggests the possibility of a movement outside and beyond the Hegelian spiral of that “progress” that is secretly nothing more than a vicious circle. *Surgo*—rise up, surge. *Insurgo*—rise up, raise oneself up. A bootstrap operation. A good-bye to that wretched parody of the karmic round, historical revolutionary futility. The slogan “Revolution!” has mutated from tocsin to toxin, a malign pseudo-Gnostic fate-trap, a nightmare where no matter how we struggle, we never escape that evil aeon, that incubus the state, one state after another, every “heaven” ruled by yet one more evil angel.

If history *is* “time,” as it claims to be, then the uprising is a moment that springs up and out of time, violates the “law” of history. If the state *is* history, as it claims to be, then the insurrection is the forbidden moment, an unforgivable denial of the dialectic—shimmying up the pole and out of the smokehole, a shaman’s maneuver carried out at an “impossible angle” to the universe. History says the revolution attains “permanence,” or at least duration, while the uprising is “temporary.” In this sense an uprising is like a “peak experience” as opposed to the standard of “ordinary” consciousness and experience. Like festivals, uprisings cannot happen every day—otherwise they would not be “nonordinary.” But such moments of intensity give shape and meaning to the entirety of a life. The shaman returns—you can’t stay up on the roof forever—but things have changed, shifts and integrations have occurred—a *difference* is made.

You will argue that this is a counsel of despair. What of the anarchist dream, the stateless state, the commune, the autonomous zone with *duration*, a free society, a free *culture*? Are we to abandon that hope in return for some existentialist *acte gratuit*? The point is not to change consciousness but to change the world.

I accept this as a fair criticism. I’d make two rejoinders nevertheless: First, *revolution* has never yet resulted in achieving this dream. The vision comes

to life in the moment of uprising—but as soon as “the revolution” triumphs and the state returns, the dream and the ideal are *already* betrayed. I have not given up hope or even expectation of change—but I distrust the word *revolution*. Second, even if we replace the revolutionary approach with a concept of *insurrection blossoming spontaneously into anarchist culture*, our own particular historical situation is not propitious for such a vast undertaking. Absolutely nothing but a futile martyrdom could possibly result now from a head-on collision with the terminal state, the megacorporate information state, the empire of spectacle and simulation. Its guns are all pointed at us, while our meager weaponry finds nothing to aim at but a hysteresis, a rigid vacuity, a spook capable of smothering every spark in an ectoplasm of information, a society of capitulation ruled by the image of the cop and the absorbent eye of the TV screen.

In short, we’re not touting the TAZ as an exclusive end in itself, replacing all other forms of organization, tactics, and goals. We recommend it because it can provide the quality of enhancement associated with the uprising without necessarily leading to violence and martyrdom. The TAZ is like an uprising that does not engage directly with the state, a guerilla operation that liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, *before* the state can crush it.

The concept of the TAZ arises first out of a critique of revolution, and an appreciation of the insurrection. The former labels the latter a failure; but for us *uprising* represents a far more interesting possibility, from the standard of a psychology of liberation, than all the “successful” revolutions of bourgeoisie, communists, fascists, etc.

The second generating force behind the TAZ springs from the historical development I call the closure of the map. The last bit of Earth unclaimed by any nation-state was eaten up in 1899. Ours is the first century without *terra incognita*, without a frontier. Nationality is the highest principle of world governance—not one speck of rock in the South Seas can be left *open*, not one remote valley, not even the moon and planets. This is the apotheosis of “territorial gangsterism.” Not one square inch of Earth goes unpoliced or untaxed—in theory.

The “map” is a political abstract grid, a gigantic *con* enforced by the carrot/stick conditioning of the “expert” state, until for most of us the map *becomes* the territory—no longer “Turtle Island” but “the United States.” And yet because the map is an abstraction, it cannot cover Earth with 1:1 accuracy. Within the fractal complexities of actual geography the map can see only dimensional grids. Hidden enfolded immensities escape the measuring rod. The map is not accurate; the map *cannot* be accurate.

So—revolution is closed, but insurgency is open. For the time being we concentrate our force on temporary “power surges,” avoiding all entanglements with “permanent solutions.”

The closures of revolution and of the map, however, are only the negative sources of the TAZ; much remains to be said of its positive inspirations. Reaction alone cannot provide the energy needed to “manifest” a TAZ.

An uprising must be *for* something as well.

The TAZ as a conscious radical tactic will emerge under certain conditions:

1. Psychological liberation. That is, we must realize (make real) the moments and spaces in which freedom is not only possible but *actual*. We must know in what ways we are genuinely oppressed, and also in what ways we are self-repressed or ensnared in a fantasy in which *ideas* oppress us. *Work*, for example, is a far more actual source of misery for most of us than legislative politics. Alienation is far more dangerous for us than toothless outdated dying ideologies. Mental addiction to “ideals”—which in fact turn out to be mere projections of our resentment and sensations of victimization—will never further our project. The TAZ is not a harbinger of some pie-in-the-sky social utopia to which we must sacrifice our lives that our children’s children may breathe a bit of free air. The TAZ must be the scene of our present autonomy, but it can exist only on the condition that we already know ourselves as free beings.
2. The *counter-Net* must expand. At present it reflects more abstraction than actuality. Zines and BBSs exchange information, which is part of the necessary groundwork of the TAZ, but very little of this information relates to concrete goods and services necessary for the autonomous life. We do not live in cyberspace; to dream that we do is to fall into cybergnosis, the false transcendence of the body. The TAZ is a physical place, and we are either in it or not. All the senses must be involved. The Web is like a new sense in some ways, but it must be *added* to the others—the others must not be subtracted from it, as in some horrible parody of the mystic trance. Without the Web, the full realization of the TAZ complex would be impossible. But the Web is not the end in itself. It’s a weapon.
3. The apparatus of control—the state—must (or so we must assume) continue to deliquesce and petrify simultaneously, must

progress on its present course in which hysterical rigidity comes more and more to mask a vacuity, an abyss of power. As power disappears, our will to power must be disappearance.

We've already dealt with the question of whether the TAZ can be viewed "merely" as a work of art. But you will also demand to know whether it is more than a poor rat-hole in the Babylon of information, or rather a maze of tunnels, more and more connected but devoted only to the economic dead end of piratical parasitism? I'll answer that I'd rather be a rat in the wall than a rat in the cage—but I'll also insist that the TAZ transcends these categories.

A world in which the TAZ succeeded in *putting down roots* might resemble the world envisioned by "P.M." in his fantasy novel *bolo'bolo*. Perhaps the TAZ is a "proto-bolo." But inasmuch as the TAZ exists *now*, it stands for much more than the mundanity of negativity or countercultural dropout-ism. We've mentioned the *festal* aspect of the moment that is uncontrolled and that adheres in spontaneous self-ordering, however brief. It is "epiphanic"—a peak experience on the social as well as individual scale.

NOTE

This piece is excerpted from Hakim Bey, *The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (New York: Autonomedia, 1991), available at <http://hermetic.com/bey/taz3.html#labelTAZ>.

10.4 The Conscience of a Hacker

THE MENTOR

Another one got caught today; it's all over the papers. "Teenager Arrested in Computer Crime Scandal," "Hacker Arrested after Bank Tampering" . . . Damn kids. They're all alike.

But did you, in your three-piece psychology and 1950s technobrain, ever take a look behind the eyes of the hacker? Did you ever wonder what made him tick, what forces shaped him, what may have molded him?

I am a hacker; enter my world. . . .

Mine is a world that begins with school. . . . I'm smarter than most of the other kids; this crap they teach us bores me. . . .

Damn underachiever. They're all alike.

I'm in junior high or high school. I've listened to teachers explain for the fifteenth time how to reduce a fraction. I understand it. "No, Ms. Smith, I didn't show my work. I did it in my head. . . ."

Damn kid. Probably copied it. They're all alike.

I made a discovery today. I found a computer. Wait a second, this is cool. It does what I want it to. If it makes a mistake, it's because I screwed it up. Not because it doesn't like me. . . .

Or feels threatened by me. . . .

Or thinks I'm a smart-ass. . . .

Or doesn't like teaching and shouldn't be here. . . .

Damn kid. All he does is play games. They're all alike.

And then it happened. . . . [A] door opened to a world . . . rushing through the phone line like heroin through an addict's veins, an electronic pulse is sent out, a refuge from the day-to-day incompetencies is sought . . . a board is found.

"This is it. . . . [T]his is where I belong. . . ."

I know everyone here . . . even if I've never met them, never talked to them, may never hear from them again. . . . I know you all. . . .

Damn kid. Tying up the phone line again. They're all alike. . . .

You bet your ass we're all alike. . . . [W]e've been spoon-fed baby food at school when we hungered for steak. . . . [T]he bits of meat that you did let slip through were pre-chewed and tasteless. We've been dominated by sadists, or ignored by the apathetic. The few that had something to teach found us willing pupils, but those few are like drops of water in the desert.

This is our world now . . . the world of the electron and the switch, the beauty of the baud. We make use of a service already existing without paying for what could be dirt-cheap if it wasn't run by profiteering gluttons, and you call us criminals. We explore . . . and you call us criminals. We seek after knowledge . . . and you call us criminals. We exist without skin color, without nationality, without religious bias . . . and you call us criminals. You build atomic bombs, you wage wars, you murder, cheat, and lie to us and try to make us believe it's for our own good, yet we're the criminals.

Yes, I am a criminal. My crime is that of curiosity. My crime is that of judging people by what they say and think, not what they look like. My crime is that of outsmarting you, something that you will never forgive me for.

I am a hacker, and this is my manifesto. You may stop this individual, but you can't stop us all. . . . [A]fter all, we're all alike.

NOTE

This piece, "The Conscience of a Hacker" (also known as "The Hacker Manifesto"), is an essay written January 8, 1986, by a computer security hacker, Loyd Blankenship, who went by the handle the Mentor. The essay is available at <http://www.phrack.org/issues/7/3.html#article>.

10.5 Horizontalism and Territory

From Argentina and Occupy to Nuit Debout and Beyond

MARINA SITRIN

Horizontal social relationships and the creation of new territory, through the use of geographic space, are the most generalized and innovative of the experiences of the Occupy movement. What we have been witnessing across the United States since September 17 is new in a myriad of ways, yet also, as everything, has local and global antecedents. In this essay I describe these two innovations and ground them in the more recent past, specifically in the global south in Argentina. I do this so as to examine commonalities and differences but also to remind us that these ways of organizing have multiple and diverse precedents, and ones from which we can hopefully learn.

HORIZONTALIDAD

Horizontalidad, horizontality, and horizontalism are words that encapsulate the ideas on which many of the social relationships and political interactions in the new global movements are grounded—from Spain to Greece and now most recently here in the U.S. Occupy movement.

Horizontalidad is a social relationship that implies, as its name suggests, a flat plane on which to communicate. *Horizontalidad* necessarily implies the use of direct democracy and the striving for consensus, processes in which attempts are made so that everyone is heard and new relationships are created. *Horizontalidad* is a new way of relating, based in affective politics and against all the implications of “isms.”¹ It is a dynamic social relationship. It is not an ideology or political program that must be met so as to create a new society or new idea. It is a break with these sorts of vertical ways of organizing and relating, and a break that is an opening.

To participate in any of the assemblies taking place throughout the United States, and in many places around the globe, means to stand or sit in a circle, with a handful of facilitators, and speak and listen in turn, usually with general guidelines and principles of unity, and then together attempt to reach consensus—meaning to reach a general agreement that all can feel satisfied with, but that is not necessarily perfect, on whatever issue is raised, all the while doing so through the process of active listening. If one were to ask a participant about this process, which I have done countless times, she would most likely explain the need to listen to one another, perhaps she might use the language of democracy—something like direct, real, or participatory de-

mocracy—or maybe she would say that we do not have a society in which people can really participate, so that is what we are trying to do here, in this space and with this assembly. Often in these conversations, some version of horizontalism will arise. So similar is this current experience in the United States to what took place in Argentina, beginning in December 2001, where I then lived and compiled an oral history, that it is not only remarkable; it requires reflection and historical grounding.

The word *horizontalidad* was first heard in the days after the December 2001 popular rebellion in Argentina. No one recalls where it came from or who first might have said it. It was a new word and emerged from a new practice. The practice was that of people coming together, looking to one another, without anyone in charge or with power over another, beginning to find ways to solve their problems together, and by doing this together, they were creating a new relationship. Both the decision-making process and the ways in which they wanted to relate in the future were horizontal. What this meant was, and still is, to be discovered in its practice, or as the Zapatistas in Chiapas say, in the walk, and always questioning as we walk.

The rebellion in Argentina came in response to a growing economic crisis that had already left hundreds of thousands without work and many thousands hungry. The state provided no possible way out—and in fact offered quite the opposite. In the days before the popular rebellion, in early December 2001, the government froze all personal bank accounts, fearing a run on the banks. In response, first one person, and then another, and then hundreds, thousands, and hundreds of thousands came out into the street, banging pots and pans, *cacerolando*. They were not led by any party and were not following any slogans; they merely sang, “Que se vayan todos! Que no quede ni uno solo!” (They all must go! Not even one should remain!). Within two weeks four governments had resigned, the Minister of the Economy being the first to flee.

In the days of the popular rebellion people who had been out in the streets *cacerolando* describe finding themselves, finding each other, looking around at one another, introducing themselves, wondering what was next, and beginning to ask questions together.

One of the most significant things about the social movements that emerged in Argentina after December 19 and 20 is how generalized the experience of *horizontalidad* was and is: from the middle class organized into neighborhood assemblies to the unemployed in neighborhoods, and with workers taking back their workplaces. *Horizontalidad* and a rejection of hierarchy and political parties was the norm for thousands of assemblies taking place on street corners, in workplaces, and throughout the unemployed

neighborhoods. And now, ten years later, as people come together to organize, the assumption is that it will be horizontal, from the hundreds of assemblies currently occurring up and down the Andes fighting against international mining companies, to the thousands of *Bachilleratos*, alternative high school diploma programs organized by former assembly participants and housed in recuperated workplaces.

Horizontalidad is a living word, reflecting an ever-changing experience. Months after the popular rebellion, many movement participants began to speak of their relationships as horizontal as a way of describing the new forms of decision making. Years after the rebellion, those continuing to build new movements speak of *horizontalidad* as a goal as well as a tool. All social relationships are still deeply affected by capitalism and hierarchy and thus by the sort of power dynamics they promote in all collective and creative spaces, especially how people relate to one another in terms of economic resources, gender, race, access to information, and experience. As a result, until these fundamental social dynamics are overcome, the goal of *horizontalidad* cannot be achieved. Time has taught that, in the face of this, simply desiring a relationship does not make it so. But the process of *horizontalidad* is a tool for the achievement of this goal. Thus *horizontalidad* is desired and is a goal, but it is also the means, the tool, for achieving this end.

Occupy participants in the United States—as well as around the globe, from Spain and Greece to London and Berlin—organize with directly democratic assemblies, and many even use the specific language of horizontal, horizontalism, and *horizontalidad*. They are using horizontal forms so as to create the most open and participatory spaces possible, while now, many months into the occupations, participants are speaking of the challenges to the process as well, similarly reflecting that *horizontalidad* is not a thing but rather a process and, as with the Argentines, both a tool and a goal.²

In the months since the Occupy movement began in the United States there has been a tremendous interest in what occurred in Argentina.³ Countless people come up to me or write to me to share that what they read about Argentina is exactly what they are feeling, and the forms of organization are remarkably similar. They then usually ask me how that is possible. Similarly in Greece, a few months into the occupation of Syntagma Square, the group SKYA (the assembly for the circulation of struggles) asked to translate *horizontalism* into Greek. It has since been translated, and in November I traveled to Athens and met with various assemblies who were beginning to use the book as a political and popular education tool. Again, as in the United States, movement participants shared how the experiences, especially of horizontalism, were so similar to the ways in which they were organizing.

TERRITORY AND SPACE

Not only do people in the current global movements organize in ways that are horizontal, but they are also doing so in open and public spaces. Part of the politics, as described by people all over the world, is the need to come together and to do so without hierarchy and in open spaces, not only where all can look at one another but where a space in society is opened up and changed, whether that be a park or an occupied plaza. This opening of space is not limited to cities and large towns either. I have spoken to dozens of people involved in the movement in the United States from small towns and villages, who meet on a street corner or in a local plaza, perhaps with only a few dozen people but still in public space. In one such instance it is a village of only three hundred people.⁴ The importance is being visible to others and using and changing space. It is part of the politics of intervening in a larger conversation but on our own terms.

The importance of location to the Occupy movement—consistently sited in public spaces so as to gather participants face to face—cannot be underestimated or seen as something coincidental: it is at the heart of the politics of the movement. Participants at each site of occupation choose to gather together and decide their own agenda. Occupiers are not protesting the state or city governments and asking them to resolve the problems of society: the politics of the movement necessarily imply that the state cannot fix the problems of society. Of course, this is not to say that things cannot be made better or that there are not countless things the Occupiers want changed, such as access to housing, education, food, and so on, but the crux of the politics is that the point of reference is not above (it is not the state) but across (looking to one another and in horizontal ways). And from that vantage point tactics and strategies are decided.

Sometimes, as with Occupy Wall Street, a place was chosen based on politics. In the case of OWS, many assemblies occurred before the actual occupation to decide what might be the best possible locations (of which there was a list of eight potentials). Settling on Zuccotti Park was indeed a political choice, both being in the Wall Street area and also being a privatized park. But the point was, again, not to make a demand. One of the first decisions of the assembly in OWS was to rename the park Liberty Plaza, claiming it as a collective space and not, for example, asking that it be made public or demanding more public space in New York. Again, we see the gaze of Occupiers focused not on demands of the “other” but on and among themselves.

In Argentina the use of space and concept of territory was also central. This was true for the neighborhood assembly movement, the unemployed movements, and the recuperated workplaces. People spoke of a new place

where they were meeting, one without the forms of institutional powers that previously existed. As one assembly participant described:

I understand horizontalidad in terms of the metaphor of territories, and a way of practicing politics through the construction of territory, it is grounded there, and direct democracy has to do with this. It is like it needs to occupy a space.⁵

The recuperated workplace movement, now numbering close to three hundred workplaces, organized under the slogan of “Occupy, Resist, Produce,” are almost all run horizontally and without bosses or hierarchy and are necessarily located in specific geographic spaces. Within this space of the workplace, workers speak of the construction of new territories—and by this they are referring to not only the fact that they have occupied a space but the ways in which they are running the workplaces together and in solidarity with people from the community and other workplaces. The new territory is created in how they run the workplace, not just in the fact of taking it over.

The unemployed workers movements first began as protests demanding an unemployment subsidy from the state, but shortly thereafter, in the midst of the protests, they began to create something different together. Their protest took the form of a blockade: not having a place of work, they took to bridges or major intersections, with the intention of shutting down that major artery. At the same time, while blockading, they were creating horizontal assemblies to decide what to do and developing an entire infrastructure of food, health care, media, and child care, together opening up a new space on the other side, yet as a part of the blockade. Many began to refer to this space as new, free “*teritorio*” (territory). Raúl Zibechi’s book *Territorios en resistencia: Cartografía de las periferias urbanas latinoamericanas*, published in 2009, deals precisely with this issue. He speaks to the importance of territory as places that are rapidly becoming sites not only of struggle but of organization. As Zibechi describes elsewhere:

The real divergence from previous time periods is the creation of territories: the long process of conformation of a social sector that can only be built while constructing spaces to house the differences. Viewed from the popular sectors, from the bottom of our societies, these territories are the product of the roots of different social relations. Life is spread out in its social, cultural, economic, and political totality through initiatives of production, health, education, celebration, and power in these physical spaces.⁶

EMERGENCY BRAKES AND NOW TIME

The various sites of the Occupy movement have all created the same two features, and ones that must be explored in depth and taken seriously: horizontal spaces and new territories in which to create new social relationships.

“Marx says that revolutions are the locomotive of world history. But perhaps it is quite otherwise. Perhaps revolutions are an attempt by the passengers on the train—namely, the human race—to activate the emergency brake.”⁷ Walter Benjamin’s words perfectly illuminate what has been going on around the globe throughout 2011—and in many places before this as well, such as with the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico, and in Argentina. The movements are about shouting, “No!,” “Ya basta!,” “Que se vayan todos!,” about the collective refusal to remain passive in an untenable situation. And so we pull the emergency brake, and in that moment freeze time and begin to open up and create something totally new. It is still not totally clear what is, and that is a part of it. There is a desire to stop time and open something new, creating new relationships and more free spaces. What this looks like is being discovered, as a part of the process, as it is created, which is also how it is being created, horizontally and in geographic space.

“SOON WE WILL BE MILLIONS”: FROM PARIS WITH LOVE AND LESSONS

To celebrate and imagine together.

To look at each other and smile.

No parties, no barriers, no labels.

Take squares and rediscover hope.

—Descriptions of French assemblies by unnamed participants interviewed by the Nuit Debout TV group

Thousands gather every evening in the Place de la République, and even more during the days and nights of the weekends. Assemblies are held every evening at 6 P.M., with people of a wide diversity of ages and social classes taking part. The plaza begins to fill around 5 P.M. with circles of people standing and sitting, talking under cardboard signs to identify the theme of their discussion, including groups on economics, education, facilitation, feminism, housing, and ecology.

Then, around 5:30 P.M. high school students march in together, chanting and singing behind sheets painted with their school names. By assembly time there are always medical, legal, media, library, and kitchen areas. And, somehow, as with every occupation I have witnessed, there is a meditation circle a

few meters from the drummers. Everything is so wonderfully familiar, having participated in similar assemblies and plaza occupations, from New York to California, Athens to Thessaloniki, Madrid to Barcelona, Buenos Aires to Cordoba—and on and on.

BRIMMING WITH DEMOCRACY

Paris is alive with democracy. Real democracy. Overflowing the streets and squares. People speaking and hearing one another in assembly after assembly. Growing in number, geography, and diversity. The movement that first began with high school students rebelling against the police killing of a student, and then mass resistance to a potential rollback of long-held labor protections, spread to people speaking in squares, trying to occupy them at night, being repressed, and coming back the next day, and the next, and the next.

This is not a protest. People here are creating something different. They are not making one demand—they are speaking to one another insisting on “real democracy,” meaning face-to-face discussions about their own lives and things that matter most to them. And when and if they do come up with demands, it will have been out of these sorts of discussions—decided horizontally and together. There are now dozens of squares holding assemblies nightly in France alone. Many more dozens of similarly organized movements are springing up in other parts of Europe and Canada as I write.

Topics of discussion vary, though the most substantive conversations happen in the various commissions and in the neighborhoods where more assemblies are springing up. These discussions are then brought back as reports to the general assembly. After only two weeks the assembly decided that consensus, while appealing in so many ways, was not working and moved to a combined form of voting with consensus. The movement is learning through practice and together with people from other movements, like Occupy Wall Street and the 15-M movement, who are also there in the squares to support and share experiences.

So many things are consistent in Paris with the other movements for real democracy, from the importance of the face-to-face discussions, the exclusion of political parties, the striving for horizontal relations, the breaking down of hierarchy, and the care of and for one another as much as possible—even if only in those hours of togetherness.

And of course the contagion of the hand signals to make one’s feelings known in a mass crowd, such as the twinkling of fingers in the air for agreement or the crossing of one’s arms in the air to show dissent. The Feminist Commission has added a new sign, reflecting the evolution of the movements, which is two fists meeting above one’s head to call out a sexist remark.

A GLOBAL RESONANCE

I have spoken with movement participants in many places throughout the world, and almost all my interlocutors—from Spain and the United States to Turkey, Greece, and Argentina—reflected on how they feel different now, since participating in the movement: more confident and with more affection for others. Something different happens when taking place in assemblies with others, listening to what strangers have to say, and taking care of one another.

The fact that every occupation insists on having food for those in need, basic medical and legal support, as well as space to just be quiet, to meditate, or to help with conflict resolution or mediation, reflects the seriousness with which the movements approach the question of relationships in the here and now.

And of course there is the joy—the music, songs, and dancing that manifest this joy at a newfound togetherness. I joked earlier about the drumming in every square around the world, but it is a space where people can be free to move and to feel. Drumming can be a release of so many deep sentiments, creating feelings of togetherness and well-being. In Paris people relayed how they are smiling at one another more, while in the United States in 2011 people spoke of all the hugs that would be given in greetings. In Argentina, the language of affect, care, and love similarly predominated.

It is clear that the Movements of the Squares—or Real Democracy Movements—that began in late 2010 are in no way ending: they are moving, popping up again and again around the globe as they change form, as they will continue to do. Movements are not linear; they move, have ebbs and flows. The movement in Paris may continue to spread and grow until there is enough popular power to govern from below. Or it may dissipate from the squares, relocating into other spheres of life—perhaps to come back again even larger and more grounded in different neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools. Or some combination of both of these. Or not. The future is yet to be determined.

SOME IDEAS FOR GOING FORWARD

So what does all of this mean for those of us in places where mass assemblies are not yet taking off—or are not taking off again right now?

I was recently part of the effort to draft “Some Possible Ideas for Going Forward,” an open call for a discussion on what a people’s agenda might look like.⁸ Rather than discussing and responding to what others say they will do—or not do—for us, we ask what we want and how we could make it happen.

In the document we use the language of a program, not in the sense of political party platform but as a possible plan for collective action. The

intention is to spark conversations—ideally in person, face-to-face—in assemblies. There are many signers to the document, with people from different backgrounds and perspectives. The intention is to generate space for a diversity of positions. Mine is that of direct democracy and the formation of local and regional assemblies.

Afghan and Sudanese refugees who had been sleeping rough are invited to install themselves at Place de la République.

The document is organized thematically, with issues such as gender, health, education, race, housing, and so on—themes not dissimilar from the commissions established in Paris or the working groups at Occupy and 15-M. Why not organize a conversation with a few people at lunch? At your university? In a plaza or square? We don't have to start with the expectation that we will launch a *Nuit Debout*, 15-M, or Occupy Wall Street right away. We just have to start talking to one another about our political agenda, and doing so face-to-face, making careful use of technology.

Many people are already doing this, of course—but ours is a call to continue these conversations, to deepen them and think together toward a future where we have a more coordinated concept of what we want and how we might make it happen.

Imagine if before Occupy or *Nuit Debout* informal and formal groups as well as neighborhoods and student groups had already come to loose agreement on a number of things, like, for example, the right to housing and the importance of taking over empty buildings to make it real. Or, using the example of the Solidarity Health Clinics in Greece, people could have decided that we should create free health care in a way that also reimagines the very meaning of health and care. Then, with that base of agreement, the working groups might develop concrete proposals or actions that could take place almost immediately.

This is the sort of thing that I imagine this document could help inspire—people coming together to think about what is important to us and how we might make it happen. Even if this does not happen right now, it could lay the groundwork for future possibilities—and gathering hundreds of thousands of people in squares around a country or region is a very real possibility for action on those things on which we agree.

CREATING A NEW FORCE

I am confident that there will be more occupations of public spaces and more assemblies. Until we live in a real democracy, it is up to us to create such spaces—and we will. But what if next time we had more preparation? More conversations about the things we have in common, the things that are most

important to us? Could we move faster? Move on toward taking over schools and workplaces?

Here I am imagining the Spanish Revolution of the 1930s and how it was able to move so fast precisely because people had been organizing and talking together for years about what they wanted and how they might make it a reality. Taking over land and running it in common, even taking over banks, was much less of a debate, as the need for such decisive action already enjoyed a general consensus in the discussions of the prior years. As the Nuit Debout Facebook page writes at the moment I am concluding these reflections [in 2016]:

We are more than 100,000 people on this page. We are in 150 cities, *#partoutdebout*, in France and dozens of cities around the world. We are also *#banlieuesdebout*, *#artistesdebout* and many other things! We are 100,000 and soon we will be millions—in the process of creating a new force that will displace the old world.

NOTES

This piece was previously published as Marina Sitrin, “Horizontalism and Territory,” *Possible Futures*, January 9, 2012, available at <http://www.possible-futures.org/2012/01/09/horizontalism-and-territory>, and Marina Sitrin, “‘Soon We Will Be Millions’: From Paris with Love and Lessons,” *Roar*, April 16, 2016, available at <https://roarmag.org/essays/from-paris-with-love-and-lessons/>.

1. My choice to translate *horizontalidad* into horizontalism in 2005 was perhaps in error; it is actually an anti-ism, and the use of *horizontalism* might now have created some confusion. At the time, I made the decision thinking that it would be a play on the word and that translations such as *horizontality* did not sufficiently reflect a changing relationship.

2. I traveled to Greece, London, and Berlin in November 2011 and spoke with people in the various Occupy movements.

3. This is reflected even in the increase in sales of *Horizontalism*, the book I edited on popular power in Argentina.

4. This village, Point Reyes, located thirty miles north of San Francisco, California, has since created an alternative option to the use of the police with a conflict resolution team, as well as promoted the use of alternative currency and has obtained the necessary number of signatures to force out their one bank and now will have a credit union.

5. Marina Sitrin, ed., *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2006), 60.

6. Raúl Zibechi, “The Revolution of 1968: When Those from Below Said Enough!” *Upside Down World*, June 11, 2008, available at <http://upsidedownworld.org/archives/international/the-revolution-of-1968-when-those-from-below-said-enough>.

7. Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 402.

8. “Collective Letter: Some Possible Ideas for Going Forward,” *Roar*, April 7, 2016, available at <https://roarmag.org/2016/04/07/some-possible-ideas-going-forward/>.

Contributors

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Franco “Bifo” Berardi is a writer, media theorist, philosopher, and activist. He teaches social history of the media at the Accademia di Brera, Milan. Berardi is author of many books, including *Futurability: The Age of Impotence and the Horizon of Possibility* (2017), *And: Phenomenology of the End* (2015), *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide* (2015), *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (2012), *After the Future* (2011), *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (2009), and *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-Alpha Generation* (2009).

Hakim Bey is the occasional pen name of Peter Lamborn Wilson. Bey is known mainly for his theory of temporary autonomous zones. After studying classics at Columbia University, Bey traveled to and lived in Lebanon, India, Pakistan, and Iran, where he developed his scholarship. Among many other books and essays, Bey is the author of *CHAOS: The Broadsheets of Ontological Anarchism* (1985), *Millennium* (1996), *TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism, Second Edition* (2003), and *Black Fez Manifesto* (2008).

Murray Bookchin (1921–2006) was a philosopher, historian, political theorist, and professor. Bookchin was the author of two dozen books, including *Our Synthetic Environment* (1962), *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* (1971), and *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982).

Bookchin taught at Goddard College, where he lectured on technology. His work led to the creation of the Social Ecology Studies program in 1974 and the Institute for Social Ecology, of which he became the director. Bookchin was a full professor at Ramapo College in New Jersey.

Henry Charles Bukowski (1920–1994) was a German-American poet, novelist, and short story writer. His work addresses the ordinary lives of poor Americans, the act of writing, alcohol, relationships with women, and the drudgery of work. Bukowski wrote thousands of poems, hundreds of short stories, six novels, and over sixty books. In 1986 *Time* called Bukowski a “laureate of American lowlife.”

Cornelius Castoriadis (1922–1997) was born in Greece and immigrated to France as an adult. He was a philosopher, social critic, economist, psychoanalyst, and cofounder of the Socialisme ou Barbarie group, which at one time included Guy Debord. His writings on autonomy and social institutions have been influential in both academic and activist circles. His major works include *L’Institution imaginaire de la société* (*Imaginary Institution of Society*) (1975) and *Les carrefours du labyrinthe* (*Crossroads in the Labyrinth*) (1978).

Ralf Dahrendorf (1929–2009) was a German-British sociologist, philosopher, political scientist, and politician. Dahrendorf was director of the London School of Economics and professor of sociology at many universities in Germany and the United Kingdom. Dahrendorf was a member of the German Parliament and member of the British House of Lords. His major works include *Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (1959) and *Essays in the Theory of Society* (1968).

Guy Debord (1931–1994) was a filmmaker, theorist, and leading member of the Situationist International, of which he was one of the founders in 1957. Debord’s major work, *The Society of the Spectacle*, was published in 1967. That work figured prominently the following year during the tumultuous French revolts of May 1968, with which Debord is often associated. Debord is also the author of *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (1990), among many other articles and books.

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910–1987) was the main founding philosopher of Marxist Humanism in the United States. Along with C.L.R. James and Grace Lee Boggs, Dunayevskaya was one of the leading critics of the “state capitalism” typically mistaken for communism in the twentieth century. Dunayevskaya wrote many articles and books, including *Marxism and Freedom* (2000), *Philosophy and Revolution* (1989), *Rosa Luxemburg, Women’s Liberation, and Marx’s Philosophy of Revolution* (1991), and *The Power of Negativity* (2002).

Martín Espada, a former tenant lawyer in Greater Boston’s Latino community, is a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst. Sandra Cisneros called him “the Pablo Neruda of North American poets.” Espada has published twenty books as a poet, editor, essayist, and translator. He is recipient of many awards and honors. *The Republic of Poetry* (2006) was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Espada’s

book of essays, *Zapata's Disciple* (1998), was banned in Tucson as part of the Mexican-American Studies Program outlawed by the state of Arizona.

Frantz Fanon (1925–1961) was a Martiniquais-French psychiatrist, philosopher, Pan-Africanist, and Marxist Humanist revolutionary. He was an influential theoretician of postcolonial politics, culture, and identity. Fanon's work focused on the psychopathology of colonization and the human, social, and cultural consequences of decolonization. His life and works have inspired national liberation movements and radical political organizations in Palestine, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and the United States. His major works include *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961).

Silvia Federici is a professor emerita and teaching fellow at Hofstra University, where she was associate professor and professor of political philosophy and international studies. Federici taught in Nigeria and was the cofounder of the Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa and a member of the Midnight Notes Collective. Federici is the author of *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (2004) and *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (2012) and is editor or coeditor of several books.

Alicia Garza is an African American activist and editorial writer who lives in Oakland, California. Garza has organized around the issues of health, student services and rights, rights for domestic workers, ending police brutality, antiracism, and violence against transgender and gender-nonconforming people of color. Her writing has been published by the *Guardian*, the *Nation*, the *Feminist Wire*, *Rolling Stone*, *Huffington Post*, and *Truthout.org*. She currently directs Special Projects at the National Domestic Workers Alliance. Garza was a major founding participant in the Black Lives Matter movement.

Richard Gilman-Opalsky is associate professor of political philosophy in the Department of Political Science at University of Illinois, Springfield. Gilman-Opalsky's teaching and research focuses on the history of political philosophy, contemporary social theory, Marxism, autonomist politics, critical theory, and social movements. He is the author of four books: *Specters of Revolt* (2016), *Precarious Communism* (2014), *Spectacular Capitalism* (2011), and *Unbounded Publics* (2008).

Henry A. Giroux is an American Canadian scholar and cultural critic. He is one of the founding theorists of critical pedagogy in the United States. Giroux is best known for his pioneering work in public pedagogy, cultural studies, youth studies, higher education, media studies, and critical theory. In 2002 Routledge named Giroux one of the top fifty educational thinkers of the modern period. He has published more than sixty books, two hundred chapters, and four hundred articles. He is also Global TV Network Chair in English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University.

David Graeber is a professor of anthropology at the London School of Economics focusing on theories of value and social theory. He is an anarchist activist, best known

for his book *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (2011). Graeber's activism includes protests against the 3rd Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in 2001 and the 2002 World Economic Forum in New York City. He was a leading figure in the Occupy Wall Street movement and is sometimes credited with having coined the slogan "We are the 99 percent."

Robert Greenwald, founder and president of Brave New Films (BNF), is an award-winning television, feature film, and documentary filmmaker. He has produced and/or directed more than fifty TV movies and miniseries. At BNF, he has produced and directed eight full-length documentaries and over a dozen short videos, uncovering corporate abuse, the military-industrial complex, the unbridled political influence of billionaires, and the tactics of Fox News. Greenwald received the 2001 Peabody Award. His films have garnered twenty-five Emmy nominations.

Félix Guattari (1930–1992) was a French psychotherapist, philosopher, semiologist, and communist revolutionary. He is best known for his major works coauthored with Gilles Deleuze, *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), which compose their influential study: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Guattari is the author of *Molecular Revolution* (1984), *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* (1989), *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (1992), *Soft Subversions* (1996), and *Chaosophy* (2009), among many other works.

David Stanley Hill is a Marxist political and educational activist. He is emeritus professor of education at Anglia Ruskin University, England; visiting professor at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece; and for fifty years a trade unionist. He was an elected Labour Party councilor for East Sussex County Council and Brighton Borough Council in the 1970s and 1980s and has fought as a candidate in thirteen local, national, and European elections since 1972.

John Holloway is a sociologist and philosopher whose work is closely associated with the Zapatista movement in Mexico, his home since 1991. Holloway's work has been taken up by theorists and activists associated with the Piqueteros in Argentina, the Abahlali baseMjondolo movement in South Africa, and many anticapitalist globalization movements. He is a professor at the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences at the Autonomous University of Puebla. Among his books are *Change the World without Taking Power* (2002) and *Crack Capitalism* (2010).

C.L.R. James (1901–1989) was an Afro-Trinidadian historian, journalist, socialist, and political activist. His work is influential in Marxist and postcolonial literature. He was also known for his playwriting and fiction. His major works include *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1963) and *A History of Pan-African Revolt* (1938).

Selma James is coauthor, with Mariarosa Dalla Costa, of the revolutionary women's movement classic *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (1972); cofounder of the International Wages for Housework Campaign; and coordinator of the Global Women's Strike. *A Woman's Place* (1952) and the recent collection *Sex, Race*

and *Class—the Perspective of Winning: A Selection of Writings, 1952–2011* (2012) are among her many writings.

KRS-One (Lawrence Parker) is an American rapper from the Bronx, New York. He rose to prominence as part of the group Boogie Down Productions, which he formed with DJ Scott La Rock in the mid-1980s. Following the release of the group's debut album, *Criminal Minded*, La Rock was shot dead, but KRS-One continued the group as a solo project. He began releasing records under his own name in 1993. KRS-One is politically active and started the Stop the Violence Movement after the death of Scott La Rock.

Staughton Craig Lynd is an American conscientious objector, Quaker, peace and civil rights activist, tax resister, historian, professor, author, and lawyer. He taught American history at Spelman College in Atlanta and at Yale University. Lynd served as director of Freedom Schools in the Mississippi Summer Project of 1964. In April 1965, he led the first march against the Vietnam War in Washington, D.C. Because of his advocacy and practice of civil disobedience, Lynd was unable to continue as a full-time history teacher and became a lawyer in 1976 for Legal Services in Youngstown, Ohio.

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Index

- abolitionist movement, 88
acceleration of information stimuli, 194, 197–199, 201
accompaniment, 300
accumulation, 124, 128, 244; primitive, 127, 263
Addison, Joseph, 274
adolescents. *See* teenagers
Adorno, Theodor, 67, 253, 254
adult education, 74, 179
advertising, 100, 101, 148
advice to a poet, Rilke's, 72–73
aesthetics, 204, 205, 206, 207, 211
affective composition, 205
African Americans, 88, 108, 114–122, 145–146, 152; Black Lives Matter movement, 134–138; and proposed March on Washington (1941), 114–116. *See also* blacks; civil rights movement
a.f.r.i.k.a. gruppe, 211
Agamben, Giorgio, 72
agriculture, 254, 255
alcohol, 219, 221, 225
Alexander, Michelle, 145–146
alienation, 26, 82, 99, 157, 190, 250, 251, 307, 311
“All Lives Matter,” 134, 137
alternative media, 150, 151, 307, 311
alternative schools, 150
Aly, Götz, 289
American Indians, 90, 128, 287
Amin, Samir, 69
anarchists and anarchism, 22–23, 24, 26, 56, 57.
 See also Bakunin, Mikhail
Anderson, Andy, 301
anti-Semitism, 113, 285, 287
antiwar demonstrations, 297
Apple Computer, 280
archaeology, 254, 255
Argentina, 94n2, 274, 315, 317–318, 321
Aristotle, 270, 289
art and artists, 190–204, 214, 283, 303, 305, 306
art strike, 211
Athenian democracy, 239–240
attention disorders, 194, 196, 198, 199, 203
The Attention Economy (Davenport and Beck), 203
automobile industry, 281–282, 287, 295
automobiles, 130

Bakunin, Mikhail, 14, 306
Baldwin, James, 101
Bandy, Robert, 119
banks and banking, 17, 148, 258–259, 323; in Argentina, 315; women's alternative systems of, 127. *See also* World Bank
Beck, John C., 198, 203
Beck, Ulrich, 250
Becker, Ernest, 67
Bell Jar (Plath), 67
Benjamin, Walter, 33, 319
Berlet, Chip, 286

- Berry, Wendell, 69
 Bey, Hakim, 209
 Biehl, João, 142
 Blacker, David, 181
 blackness, 109, 113, 114
 blacks, 54, 55, 87–88, 107–114. *See also* African Americans
 black women, queer, 135
 Bloch, Ernst, 33, 34, 152
bolo'bolo (P.M.), 312
 Bologna, Sergio, 289
 Bolshevik Revolution, 1, 47–52, 58, 295, 297–298
 bomb shelters, 307–308
 Bookchin, Murray, 26
 Bordieu, Pierre, 256n14
 Bourriaud, Nicolas, 206–207
 brain, 196–197, 202
 Britain, 11–12, 16, 181, 271–273; education policy in, 163, 174, 177, 179; Spies for Peace in, 307, 308
 Brooks, David, 146
 Brown, Mike, 134
 Bush, George W., 302
 Bush, Jeb, 146
- Caliban and the Witch* (Federici), 127
Capital (Marx), 1–2, 7, 36, 37, 79, 87, 273
 capital, definition of, 9, 10
Capital in the Twenty-First Century (Piketty), 2, 3–4, 6–21, 23, 27
 Carlsson, Chris, 125
 cars, 130
 Carter, Jimmy, 41
 caste, 84, 85, 86, 87
 Castoriadis, Cornelius, 255
Catcher in the Rye (Salinger), 71–72
 Chambers, Iain, 251
 chaos, 202–203
 Chapman University, 156, 159
 child care, 102, 129–130
 childhood, 66–67, 71
 children, 73–74, 142, 148, 151; African American, 146; and attention disorders, 196; crimes by, 100; and hunger, 144; and labor, 90, 144; powerlessness of, 85; psychological development of, 279. *See also* child care; education
 Chile, 94n2, 127
 China, 271, 274
 Christianity, 100–101, 103–104, 157, 158–159, 297
Civilization and Its Discontents (Freud), 254
 civil rights movement, 54–55, 299, 301
 Clark, David, 147
 class, 23, 78–106, 278; definition of, 78–79; in education, 67, 174, 176; ideology as basis of, 59; Marx theory of, 79–82; sex and race and, 84–89, 102, 107; in Vietnam War opposition, 301; views of economics and, 8
 class consciousness, 181, 278
 classlessness, 83
 class war, 140, 160, 181, 211, 267
 climate change, 260
 Coeurderoy, Ernest, 193
 cognition, speedup and, 198–199
 cognitive work. *See* intellectual labor
 collapse, meaning of, 196
 collectivization of reproductive labor, 127, 129, 131
 college students and mental illness, 142
 Collins, James, 119
 colonialism, 271–272, 286
 commodification, 69, 70, 140; of education, 68, 160; of knowledge, 135; of social relations, 124; of youth, 148
 commons, 10, 131, 205, 263–265, 317–318; feminism and, 122–133
 “common sense,” 62–65
 communal property, 82, 123
 communism, 12, 33, 159, 264; Council Communists, 56, 57; dominant view of, 3; of Jesus, 157, 158; Russian, 52–53
 Communist Party, 50, 52, 53
 competence and competition, 203
 consumerism, 99, 103, 140, 148, 186–188, 190, 251; in art, 193; unhappiness and, 200
 Copeau, Jacques, 72
 Corbyn, Jeremy, 16
 Cortez, Jayne, 103
 courts, 39, 143
Crack Capitalism (Holloway), 34
 creativity, 190, 193; alienation of, 189–190
 credit associations, women’s, 127
 credit cards, history of, 273
 crime, 193, 203
 criminalization, 148
 crisis, 35–38, 42, 130, 148, 241–242, 245, 250, 252; ecological, 244, 245; economic, 130, 148, 200, 201, 202, 244, 258–259, 275; political, 148, 201
 critical pedagogy, 156, 157, 158, 160–170, 172–173
 critical thinking, 163, 168, 179
 critique, 152
 Crosswaith, Frank, 114
 Cullors, Patrisse, 134
 culture, definition of, 25, 86
 curricula, 163, 165, 173–174, 179

- cyberspace, 197, 198, 201–202, 278
 cybertime, 201–202
- Davenport, Thomas H., 198, 203
 Davis, Angela Y., 186
 de Angelis, Massimo, 131
Dearborn Independent, 287
 Debord, Guy, 73
 debt, 269–277
 decentralism, 242, 243, 248
The Decline of the West (Spengler), 253
 de Kat, Otto, 71
 Deleuze, Gilles, 72–73, 202, 204, 205, 210, 289–290
 democracy, 3, 39, 284; Athenian, 239–240; fascism and, 289, 290; Giroux on, 150; Greenwald on, 226; O'Connor on, 248–249; participatory, 295, 314–315, 320
 Denmark, 307, 308
 depression (economics), 196. *See also* Great Depression
 depression (psychology), 194, 199, 250
dérive, 73
 despotism, 60
 Dewey, John, 67
Dialectic of Enlightenment (Adorno and Horkheimer), 253
 dialectics, 105, 158
 digital labor, 201
 digital technology, psychological effects of, 194, 195, 198, 201
 disease, 250
 division of labor, 65, 85, 90, 128–129, 255, 278
 documentary filmmaking, 226–230
 domestication of animals and plants, 254, 255
 domestic violence, 143, 290–291
 Douglass, Frederick, 88
 drinking, 219, 221, 225
 Drori, Gili S., 166
 drugs, 144–145, 196, 199, 250
 drumming, 156, 208, 209, 214, 282, 321
 dualism, 251, 256n14
 Durkheim, Émile, 254
 dyslexia, 198
 dystopia, 143, 281, 284
- Eco, Umberto, 283
 ecology, 26, 234–265
 education, 24–25, 65–77, 149, 170–185; popular, 294; socialist manifesto for, 176–180; as state apparatus, 161. *See also* higher education; pedagogy; schooling
 Egypt, 14–15, 32, 282
 elite, 56, 67, 140
Empire (Hardt and Negri), 252–253
 enclosure of the commons, 123, 263–265
 Engels, Friedrich, 247
 England. *See* Britain
 environment, 101–102, 131, 233–234, 253, 263; education about, 125, 179. *See also* ecology
 environmentalists, mainstream, 242–243, 244
Eros and Civilization (Marcuse), 253–254
 ethics, 140, 144, 153, 238; in education, 157, 158, 159, 178; in liberalism, 68; Marxism and, 249; in neoliberalism, 70; in social ecology, 239, 240. *See also* morality
 European Economic Community, 42–43
 executive power, 143
- False Consciousness* (Gabel), 60–61
 familial-vocational privatism, 10, 29n24
 family, nuclear, 100
 Fanon, Frantz, 55, 139, 149
 Farahmandpur, Ramin, 166–167
 farming, 254, 255
 fascism, 284–292
 fear, 12, 19, 140, 141, 275
 February Revolution, 297–198
 Federici, Silvia, 17
 feminism, 17, 86, 87, 88, 122–133, 320
 feminization of poverty, 245
 Fernandez, Margarita, 125
 Feuerbach, Ludwig, 248
 Feyerabend, Paul, 73–74
 Fiat, 281, 282
The Figure in the Distance (de Kat), 71
 film, 91, 226–229
 Finland, 50, 174, 177
 first nature, 236, 238, 239
 fishing, 133n13
 flexible work, 23, 163, 195
 flowers in gun barrels (antiwar meme), 297
 Foo Festival (Providence, Rhode Island, 2006), 209–210
 forced labor, 58, 89, 144, 190, 271
 Ford, Henry, 284–286, 287–288, 291
 Foucault, Michel, 70, 251
 Fourier, Charles, 105
 France, 11–12, 16, 40, 41, 319–320, 322, 323; Dunayevskaya in, 55; and François Mitterand, 277; labor law in, 18, 23; May 1968 in, 64; national debt of, 271
 free trade agreements, 18, 294
 Freire, Paulo, 156, 172
 Freud, Anna, 101
 Fromm, Erich, 139
 Fukuyama, Francis, 19, 29n41
 Futurists, 204, 283

- Gabel, Joseph, 60–61
 gardens, urban, 125–126
 Gauguin, Paul, 306
 gaze, white, 107, 108, 111
 Geiger, Theodor, 79
 gender: fascism and, 291; labor and, 84–94. *See also* male supremacy
 general strikes, 298, 301
 generations, 278–279
 Germany, 283; Nazis, 285, 286, 287, 289
 Gilman-Opalsky, Richard, 71
 Gingrich, Newt, 144
 Glaberman, Marty, 300
 globalization: meaning of, 160, 167; resistance to, 293–303
 Global South. *See* third world
 global warming, 260
 Goebbels, Joseph, 189
 Goldman, Emma, 26
 Goya, Francisco, 147
 Graeber, David, 8, 16–17
 graffiti and stencil art, 210
 Gramsci, Antonio, 1–2, 172, 173, 301
 Grant, George, 255
 Great Britain. *See* Britain
 Great Depression, 35, 130
 Greece, 15–16, 31, 32, 34, 35, 176, 316, 322;
 ancient, 239–240, 289
 green movement, 242
 Greenwald, Robert, 226–230
 Guattari, Félix, 202, 204, 205, 210, 233, 289–290
 guerrilla cultural actions, 306–307
- Habermas, Jürgen, 252, 255
 hackers, 312–313
 hand signals, 320
 happiness, 67, 200, 305
 Hardin, Garrett, 263
 Hardt, Michael, 252–253
 Hayden, Dolores, 131
 Hayek, Friedrich von, 69
 health care, 15, 322
 Hegel, G.W.F., 59, 60, 80, 108, 248
 Heller, Agnes, 250–251
 Herzog, Dagmar, 289
 heteropatriarchy, 135, 136, 137–138
 higher education, 63, 66, 68–69, 141, 148, 150, 163
 Hill, Dave, 162
 Hillman, James, 201
 historical materialism, 26–27, 247
 historicity, 33, 35, 109
 Hitler, Adolf, 285, 289
- Hobbes, Thomas, 16, 254
 hobos, 130
 Hollande, François, 12, 16
 Holloway, John, 17, 22
 Home, Stewart, 204, 211
 homelessness, 141, 144, 148
 homemakers, 84, 85, 87, 89, 90, 92, 94n2, 131
 Homestead Strike, 293
 homophobia, 180–181, 289, 291
 hope, 31–38, 152–153, 159
 horizontalism, 314–323
 Horkheimer, Max, 253, 254
 housewives, 84, 85, 87, 89, 90, 92, 94n2, 131
 housework, 90, 92–93, 102, 129, 131, 132
 housing, 130, 131; discrimination and, 117–118
 Hudson, Michael, 274
 Hughes, Langston, 107
 humanist pedagogy, 66–68
 human mind: Internet and, 279; speedup and, 198–199; video-electronic media and, 279
 human nature, 63–64, 65
 human rights, 19, 43, 136, 264
 Hume, David, 70
 Hungary, 52–53, 300–301
Hungary '56 (Anderson), 301
- ideology, 5, 23, 56–77, 152; critique of, 173;
 education and, 161, 171–172, 173; income inequality and, 94–95; quantity and, 188–189;
 war of, 181
 illness, 250. *See also* mental illness
 IMF (International Monetary Fund), 274
 immigrants, 18, 136, 144, 287; in France, 39, 43;
 urban gardens and, 125; as workers, 102, 271
In Catastrophic Times (Stengers), 259
 income, 9, 10–12, 15; inequality in, 10–12, 23, 24, 51, 78, 94–99, 245. *See also* wages and wage labor
 indenture, 271, 276n4, 276n6
 India, 127, 271–272
 Indians (Native Americans), 90, 128, 287
 indigenous peoples, 90, 243, 252. *See also* Native Americans
 Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), 211
 inequality, 10–11, 13, 17, 94–99, 146, 147, 159.
See also class
 Infernal Noise Brigade, 205, 208
 information overload, 197, 198, 201, 203, 206, 308
 information technology, psychological effects of, 194, 195, 197–199, 201
 info-sphere, 196–200, 201
 insurrection, 15, 16, 22, 189, 237; *cacerolando*
 example of, 315; Hakim Bey on, 309, 310;
 Kristeva on, 26, 293

- intellectual labor, 163, 283; depression and, 195;
information overload and, 203
- international education policy, 160–170
- International Monetary Fund (IMF), 274
- Internet, psychological aspects of, 197, 198,
201–202, 278
- intervention, 258, 306–307; artistic/aesthetic,
207–208, 211–212
- irresponsibility, 128–129, 143, 147, 260, 262,
282
- Italy, 280–283, 287, 289, 296
- IWW (Industrial Workers of the World), 211
- James, C.L.R., 266
- Jameson, Frederic, 251
- Jappe, Anselm, 250
- Jesus, 157, 158, 159
- Jews, 111, 112–113
- joint-stock corporations, history of, 276n2
- judiciary, 39, 143
- Kant, Immanuel, 67
- Karnououh, Claude, 250, 252, 255
- Katsiaficas, George, 206
- Kent State University, antiwar movement at, 297
- Khrushchev, Nikita, 301
- kibbutzim* (collective settlements), 83
- Kierkegaard, Søren, 69
- knowledge society, 162–163
- Knox, Frank, 116, 117
- Kollontai, Alexandra, 295
- Krahl, Hans Jürgen, 283
- Kristeva, Julia, 26, 293
- Krugman, Paul, 146
- Krutch, Joseph Wood, 250
- Kubler, George, 212
- labor. *See* work
- labor, division of, 65, 85, 90, 128–129, 255, 278
- labor movement, 243–244, 281, 293, 295–296,
297, 302
- labor power, 80, 96–97, 130, 173, 188, 263–264;
Marx on, 85, 87, 88–89; Rikowski on, 162
- Labour Party (UK), 16
- LaGuardia, Fiorello, 116, 117–118, 120
- Landless People's Movement, 131
- Latin America, 90, 127, 169, 274, 294, 300. *See*
also Argentina; Chile; Mexico; Venezuela
- Leeds May Day Group, 210–211
- Lenin, Vladimir, 47–48
- Lettrist International, 304
- liberalism, 66–68, 69; definition of, 28n16
- liberation theology, 158–159, 297
- lifelong learning, 163
- Linebaugh, Peter, 122, 125
- L'informatisation de la société* (Minc and Nora),
280
- localism, 243, 248
- Luxemburg, Rosa, 107
- Lyotard, Jean-François, 252, 280
- Machado, Antonio, 300
- The Magna Carta Manifesto* (Linebaugh), 125
- Maine, 132n2, 133n13
- male supremacy, 100–101, 104, 235
- Mannheim, Karl, 60
- maps, 310
- Marazzi, Christian, 198
- marching bands, 208–210
- March on Washington, proposed (1941), 114–
116, 120
- Marcuse, Herbert, 78, 105
- Martin, Glen L., 116
- Martin, Randy, 204–205
- Martin, Trayvon, 134
- Marx, Karl, 5, 6, 13, 31, 246, 247–248, 253;
Capital, 1–2, 7, 36, 37, 79, 87, 273; on capital
compared to individual, 67; expropriation of
commons and, 263–264; Holloway on, 35,
36–37; on ideology, 56; on overproduction
crisis, 202; Piketty on, 6–8, 18; on revolution,
319; and theory of class, 79–82; “Theses on
Feuerbach,” 60; on work, 103
- Marxists and Marxism, 19, 25–26, 247, 252,
297; education and, 161, 166–168, 171–185;
Gramsci and, 2; Holloway on, 35; wages and,
96–97
- mass media, 91–92, 141, 151, 227–228, 287
- McLaren, Peter, 25, 156–160, 172
- McLuhan, Marshall, 279
- media: alternative, 150, 151, 307, 311; digital,
288 (*see also* Internet, psychological aspects
of); mainstream, 91–92, 141, 151, 227–228,
287
- media-sphere, 279
- medieval era, 204, 240, 269, 272, 274, 276n6
- mental illness, 142, 198–199. *See also* depression
(psychology)
- meritocracy, 13, 23, 95–96, 98
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, 31
- Metzger, Gustav, 211
- Mexican immigrants, 144, 288
- Mexico, 34, 91, 92, 122, 294
- Michael, Mike, 251
- Middle Ages, 204, 240, 269, 272, 274, 276n6
- Mies, Maria, 128–129
- migrants, 260, 271, 281. *See also* immigrants
- militarization, 145, 275

- military, 64, 100; fraternization with, 296–299; marching bands and, 209, 210; segregation in, 117
- Mills, C. Wright, 56
- Minc, Alain, 280
- mind, human. *See* human mind
- miserabilism, 99–106
- Mises, Ludwig von, 69
- Mitrani, Nora, 105
- modernity, 250–251, 253, 278, 284
- Molecular Revolution* (Guattari), 47n1
- Montaigne, Michel de, 73
- Moore, Darnell L., 134
- moralism, 90, 102, 146, 238
- morality, 145, 146, 150, 237, 238, 239; Agamben on, 72; of capitalism, 10, 21, 238, 271; as crux of poverty, 146; Greenwald on, 227; indifference to, 143, 145, 149; liberal, 66, 68; McLaren on, 157, 158
- Movements of the Squares, 31, 316, 320, 321, 322
- Movimiento Sin Tierra (MST), 131
- Mueller, Justin, 287
- multitasking, 198
- music, marching band, 208–210
- mythological thinking, 279
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 114–115
- national debt, 271
- National-Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), 287
- Native Americans, 90, 128, 287
- nature, 250–251, 253, 254, 255; Bookchin on, 234, 236, 237, 238, 239
- Nazis, 285, 286, 287, 289
- Negri, Antonio, 126, 252–253
- negritude, 109, 113, 114
- neighborhood assembly movement (Argentina), 315–316, 317–318
- neoliberalism, 68–71; and education policy, 141, 160–170; Federici on, 123; Giroux on, 144
- Nestle, 132n2
- New Deal, 19
- Newton, Huey P., 107
- New York City: African Americans in, 116–122; gardens in, 125
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, 65
- nihilism, 191, 251, 252
- Nobel Prize for Economics, 124
- No Child Left Behind, 165
- Nora, Simon, 280
- North Carolina, 141
- Nowtopia* (Carlsson), 125
- nuclear family, 100
- nuclear war, preparation for, 307–308
- Nuit Debout, 16, 319, 322, 323
- Occupy movement, 314, 317, 319
- Occupy Wall Street (OWS), 317, 320
- O'Connor, James, 26
- old age, 130
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 160–161, 162, 164–166
- Orwell, George, 78, 139, 141, 143, 146, 147, 153
- Ostrom, Elinor, 124
- Other, 107–114
- overproduction, 202
- pacifism, 297
- panic, 194, 199, 200–201, 202
- Pannekoek, Anton, 186
- Paris, 240, 320, 321, 322
- Parks, Rosa, 54–55
- participatory democracy, 295, 314–315, 320
- Paterson silk strike (1913), 216–219
- patriarchy, 135, 136, 137–138
- peace demonstrations, 297
- pedagogy, 24–25, 65–77, 147, 150–151; banking model of education, 172. *See also* critical pedagogy
- persona, 72
- Peru, 127
- Peters, DeWitt, 190
- Petofi Circle, 301
- philosophy and theory, 55
- Piketty, Thomas, 2, 3–4, 6–21, 23, 27
- pirate radio, 307
- PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), 160–161, 164–166
- Plath, Sylvia, 67
- Podlashuc, Leo, 128
- poetic politics, 101
- poetry, 72–73, 105, 191–192, 193, 214–219, 283
- police, 152; fraternization with, 296; in Italy, 280; KRS-One on, 230–232; militarization of, 145; in New York City, 118, 119; in schools, 148; in Serbia, 298; SWAT teams, 145
- postmodernism, 251–252, 278
- poverty, 146, 245
- Powell, Adam Clayton, 118
- power, 95, 143; Bookchin on, 240; capital and, 9; consumption and, 188; military, 274; wealth and, 187. *See also* labor power
- praxis, 21–22, 157
- Praxis Group, 211
- prehistory, 254–255

- prescription drugs, 144–145, 196, 199, 250
 presidential power, 143
 primitive accumulation, 127, 263
 primitivism, arguments for, 250–258
 prison, 142, 146; as model for schools, 145, 148
 private property, 18, 80–83
 private schools, 178
 privatization, 15, 25; of education, 175, 178;
 of fishing, 133n13; of reproduction, 130; of
 water, 132n2
 Programme for International Student Assessment
 (PISA), 160–161, 164–166
 proletarianization: of artists, 191; of intellectual
 labor, 162, 163; in Middle Ages, 272
 property, private, 18, 80–83
 protests, 260; African American, 114–122; anti-
 Vietnam War, 297; in Denmark, 307, 308; in
 Italy, 280, 282; in Russia, 301
 psychology, 194, 195, 198, 199, 201, 250
 public space and public land. *See* commons

 quantity and quality, 188–189
 queer black women, 135

 race and racism, 84–89, 104–105, 107–114, 117,
 271, 286, 291; and Trump, 288
 radical, definition of, 4
 radical marching bands, 208–210
 rage, 31, 32, 280
 Randolph, Philip, 114, 115–116, 120
 received wisdom, 62–65
 Reclaim the Streets, 208
 Red Brigades, 280
 red green politics, 241–242
 redistribution, 14, 15, 147
 Reinsborough, Patrick, 211
 relational aesthetics, 206–207
 religion, 86; education and, 171, 178. *See also*
 Christianity
 reproductive labor, 127, 129–130, 131–132
 reserve army of labor, 91, 102
 revolt. *See* insurrection
 revolution, 55, 176, 267, 269n4; Benjamin on,
 319; Castoriadis on, 58; Debord on, 62, 303–
 304; Hakim Bey on, 309–310, 311; Karnoouh
 on, 255; Merleau-Ponty on, 31
 rights, 38–40. *See also* human rights
 Rikowski, Glenn, 162
 Rilke, Rainer, 72–73
 riots, 32, 118, 119–120, 280
 Rucker, Rudolf, 22–23
 Roediger, Dave, 101, 104
 Rome, 280, 281; ancient, 78
 Romero, Oscar, 297, 300

 Roosevelt, Eleanor, 115–116
 Roosevelt, Franklin, 114, 115, 116, 120, 121
 Russia, 275
 Russian Revolution: of 1905, 301; of 1917, 1,
 47–52, 58, 295, 297–298

 Sartre, Jean-Paul, 111, 113–114
 schooling, 85, 142, 150, 160–170
 school meals programs, 144, 179
 SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), 299
 second nature, 234, 237, 239, 248
 secrecy, 308
 sectarianism, 304
 self-activity, 295–296
 self-hatred, 101
 self-identification, 103
 self-policing, 64–65
 semio-capitalism, 202, 283
 Sennett, Richard, 151
 Serbia, 298–299
 sex education, 180
 sexism, 5, 87, 104–105, 290, 291, 320; in Chile,
 94n2
 sexuality, Nazis and, 289
 sexual objectification of women, 89
 Shachtman, Max, 48–49, 51
 Shakur, Assata, 138
 Shkreli, Martin, 144–145
 singularization, 45, 46
 “Skills, Not Knowledge” (Thatcher), 163
 slavery, 271
 Smith, Adam, 79, 272, 273
 SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating
 Committee), 299
 social class. *See* class
 social ecology, 26, 233–241
 socialism, 129, 181–182; ecology and, 241–249;
 education and, 167, 174, 176–180; of Jesus,
 159; theater and, 205. *See also* state socialism
 socialist manifesto for education, 176–180
 Socialist Party of America, 114
 socialist pedagogy, 167
 social scientists, 63–65
 Socrates, 66
 songs, 230–232, 293
 Soper, Kate, 248
 Soviet Union, 12, 18, 19, 47–52, 275, 301;
 Castoriadis on, 56, 58; invasion of Hungary
 by, 52–53
 space, public. *See* commons
 Spanish Revolution, 323
 spectacle, 60, 61–62, 210, 211
 speedup of information stimuli, 194, 197–199,
 201

- Spengler, Oswald, 253
 Spies for Peace, 307, 308
 spontaneity, 190–191, 193
 Stalin, Josef, 186, 301
 Stalinism: in Soviet Union, 50; in United States, 115
State and Revolution (Lenin), 48
 state apparatus, 311–312; education as, 161, 171–172, 173
 state capitalism, 47–52, 53
 state socialism, 48–50, 51, 58
 stereotypes, 186; of blacks, 112; of Jews, 111
 Stimson, Henry, 116, 117
 stock markets, history of, 271
 street arts, 205, 206, 208–211
 strikes, 211, 282, 293, 298
 student debt, 148
 student movement: in France, 64, 319; in Germany, 283; in Hungary, 53; in United States, 297, 299, 301–302
 Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), 299
 Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), 299
 suicide, 142, 199, 200, 250
 surplus labor, 91, 102
 surplus value, 37, 80, 161, 201
 surrealists and surrealism, 101, 105, 204, 283
 surveillance, 140, 141, 143, 147
 symbol, definition of, 270
 symbolic violence, 141, 307
 Syriza, 15–16, 176
- taxation, 14, 16–17, 21
 teacher education and training, 180
 teaching. *See* pedagogy
Teaching against Global Capitalism and the New Imperialism (McLaren and Farahmandpur), 166–167
 technology, 229, 241, 246, 251, 252, 253, 255, 283; cognition and, 278, 279; personal computers, 280; as totalizing dimension, 284
 teenagers: and attention disorders, 196; as consumers, 186–187
 temporary autonomous zones (TAZ), 130, 210–211, 308–312
 testing, educational, 177
 Thatcher, Margaret, 163
 theater, 204–205
 theology of liberation, 158–159, 297
 theory and philosophy, 55
 third world, 43, 127, 124; commons in, 127; workers in, 90–93
This Boy's Life (Wolff), 71
 Thomas, Oswald, 74
- TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), 166
 Tometi, Opal, 123
 totalitarianism, 60
 Toulmin, Stephen, 177
Towards the Abolition of Whiteness (Roediger), 104
 “Tragedy of the Commons” (Hardin), 263
 tramps, 130
 transversality, 44, 45, 46
 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), 166
 Trotsky, Leon, 47, 49, 177, 181–183, 295, 297–298, 301
 Trump, Donald, 144, 284–285, 288–289, 290, 291
 Tzara, Tristan, 191
- UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles), 159
 Uljens, Michael, 166
 unemployment, 102, 261; in fiction, 222, 225; in Italy, 281, 283; in Mexico, 92
 unhappiness, 200, 254
 unions, 243–244, 295–296, 299, 302
 United Kingdom. *See* Britain
 United Mine Workers of America, 121–122
 United Nations, 124
 unity, 65, 83, 137, 304, 314; working-class, 89
 unwaged labor, 84, 85, 89–94
 urban gardens, 125–126
 urban panic, 202–203
 USSR. *See* Soviet Union
 utopia and utopianism, 158, 193, 207, 240–241, 272, 284
- Valentine, Lewis, 118
 value, surplus, 37, 80, 161, 201
 Vaneigem, Raoul, 26
 vanguardism, 46, 299–300
 Venezuela, 159, 169, 306
 victim-blaming, 57, 290
 video-electronic media-sphere, 279
 Vietnam War, 297, 299, 301
 violence: domestic, 143, 290–291; symbolic, 141, 307
 Virilio, Paul, 197
 Virno, Paulo, 206
 Vogelín, Eric, 251
 voting, 63, 277, 295
 Vygotsky, Lev, 172
- wages and wage labor, 11, 20, 51, 68–69, 272, 274; crises and, 130; inequality in, 94–99;

- received wisdom about, 63; Selma James on, 84–89, 89–94
 wage slavery, 87, 99–106
 war industry, 116
 water, 246; pollution of, 250; privatization of, 132n2
 Weber, Max, 10
 Wellmer, Albrecht, 253
 West Virginia, 144
 White, Daniel, 250–251
 White, Walter, 114–116, 120, 121
 Whitebook, Joel, 255
 Whitehead, Alfred North, 295
 whiteness, 104–105
 white supremacy, 104, 137, 288
 Whitman, Walt, 214
 Wilde, Oscar, 71
 Wilson, Darren, 134
 Wisconsin, 141
 witch hunts, 127
 Wolff, Tobias, 71
 women, 84–94, 102, 104, 135; and class, 102, 107; commons and, 126–128. *See also* sexism
 work: in fiction, 219–225; fractalization of, 195–196; miserabilism of, 99–106, 311. *See also* digital labor; flexible work; forced labor; intellectual labor; labor movement; reproductive labor
 workers' councils, 296
 workers' education, 163, 165
 work hours, 11
 World Bank, 124, 162
 World Trade Organization (WTO), 18, 264
The Wretched of the Earth (Fanon), 139
 Zapatistas, 294
 Zibechi, Raúl, 318
 Zimmerman, George, 134
 Zinn, Howard, 153

